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TASSO AND LEONORA.

BY THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

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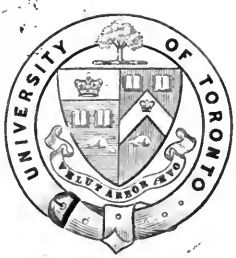

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C.F. NICHOLLS

TASSO AND LEONORA.

The COMMENTARIES OF SER PANTALEONE *degli Gambacorti,*

Gentleman Usher to the august
MADAMA LEONORA D'ESTE.

Hæc scripsi
Non otii abundantiâ, sed amoris.

BY
THE AUTHOR OF "MARY POWELL."

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Sublatam ex oculis quærimus invidi.

CHAPTER I.

Of Ser Pantaleone's *encountering a Friend & some Enemies.*

I WAS travelling Vetturino between *Vicenza* and *Padua*, when a pretty young Gentleman, likewiſe travelling Poſt, came up with me. He appeared about eighteen Years of Age, was tall and well-ſhaped, with an oval Face and Head, ſtrait and beautiful Noſe, Eyes of a vivid blue, Hair of a Mezzotint betwixt brown and fair, white and even Teeth, a Mouth of moſt ſweet Expreſſion, and a winning, engaging Addreſs. He cheerfully accoſted me, and we fell to talking of indifferent Matters, which ſerved to beguile the Monotony of the

Road. I ſoon found him to be a Univerſity Student, returning to *Padua;* and as we became more familiar, we got upon the proportionate Merit of Arms and Letters; whereupon my young Gentleman, warming with his Subject, and unable to tell from my peaceable Habit that I had once been a Soldier, exclaimed, "Away with thoſe who would place Letters below Arms! For, whether is the more dignified and worthy to be praiſed, the Labour of the Mind or of the Body? The latter may be had any Time in the Market, of the Peaſant that delves as well of the Ox that draws; and a Soldier will engage himſelf for a Giulio a Day, to ſlay or be ſlain, without caring for what State or Prince. The General whom he obeys exerciſes his Mind, indeed, in Stratagems and Aſſaults of War,—how to circumvallate this City, how to carry that Fortification; but all this which he practiſes in the Field, he has ſtudied in the Cloſet; wherefore I ſtill maintain that the Work of the Head is ſuperior to that of the Hand, ſince a prudent

Commander needs not to ſtrike a Blow, but only to overlook and direct his Soldiers as ſo many Puppets."

"That being the Caſe," ſaid I, who was willing to put him up a little, and divert myſelf with his Talk, "is not the General, after all, to be placed above the mere Man of Letters, ſince he turns his Knowledge to practical Account?"

"No," replied he warmly; "for the higheſt Uſe of Letters is not that which teaches a Man the Rules of Defence and Attack, but that which raiſes and conducts his Soul to Heaven. To determine the comparative Value of two Purſuits, we muſt conſider their Aim and End. Where there is no Strife, there can be no Need of Soldiers; and Strife came into the World with Sin, and is a Disgrace to Humanity. But, ſince Sin and Strife have entered the World, it has come to paſs that numberleſs brave Men, who would otherwiſe have done better to keep quiet, have been impelled to redreſs Injuries, and aſſert Right by Might, oppoſing Force to

Force. But what Renown, I pray you, would have been the Portion of theſe Heroes, without the Bookmen? Who would hear, now-a-days, of *Neſtor*, *Ulysses*, *Agamemnon*, *Achilles*, or *Diomed*, but for *Homer?* Or of *Æneas* but for *Virgil?* Wherefore I ſay and maintain that ſo uſeleſs a Thing as a Sword . . . "

At this Moment, three Banditti ruſhing out upon us from a little Thicket of Cheſtnut-trees, fell upon my young Squire and me, who, without another Word whether Swords were uſeleſs or no, out with our Rapiers, and began to uſe them to ſuch good Purpoſe that the Villains preſently made off, none the better, but all the worſe, for the Encounter. As for our two Vetturini, they had diſappeared at the very Beginning of the Fray.

Though the whole Affair only occupied a few Minutes, I could not but notice how ſmartly the Youth laid about him; and, indeed, it was my involuntary Attention to the pretty Uſe he made of his Weapon that put me for a Moment off my Guard, and

permitted one of the Raſcals to give me a Slaſh acroſs the Forehead, which made the Blood run over my Eyes.

As ſoon as the Gang had diſappeared, the Youth, ſeeing me reel on my Horſe, ſprang from his own, and caught me in his Arms, my Weight nearly bringing him to the Ground.

"Soho! gently, gently," ſays he, haling me up a little on the Bank. "How fares it with you, Signor Cavaliere?"

Inſtead of anſwering him, I burſt out a laughing.

"One would think you were not hurt," ſays he; "but yet your Brow has a pretty deep Gaſh in it."

"Who could chooſe but laugh," ſaid I, recovering, "to ſee you attack the Rogues as you did, when the Concluſion was ſcarce out of your Mouth that Swords were uſeleſs?"

"Ah, I was ſpeaking of comparative, not of abſolute Values," ſaid he merrily, "and had not Time for my Peroration. But let me

draw the Sides of your Wound together, and ſtanch the Blood with ſome of the Felt off my Hat. Firſt, though, I muſt waſh your Brow a little."

And, going to a Fountain hard by, he dipped his Handkerchief therein, and forthwith cleanſed, dreſſed, and bound up my Wound very cleverly. I then noted ſome Blood trickling from his Sword-arm.

"You are hurt, too," ſaid I.

"A mere Scratch," replied he gaily. "You know, according to my own Rule, the Head ſhould take precedence of the Arm; and now that you can uſe your Eyes once more, you can twiſt this wet Handkerchief round above my Elbow. The Rogues needed not to have fallen on my uſeful Side, neither. How ſhall I write with my left Hand? There's no Courteſy to be looked for from ſuch Knaves; but the old Laws of Chivalry forbade a Man to ſtrike at the Arms or Legs of his Opponent."

Having bound up his Wound, which was not very deep, as carefully as he had done

mine, we remounted our Horſes, and were preſently joined by the two Vetturini, whom we rallied well for their Cowardice.

"And now that we have bled in each other's Company," ſaid I, as we purſued our Way, "I ſhall be glad to know the Name of my valiant young Brother-in-arms."

"I am too young," ſaid he, "for my Name to have made any Noiſe in the World—it is *Torquato Taſſo.*"

"What!" exclaimed I, "the Son of my eſteemed old Friend, Meſſer *Bernardo?*"

"The ſame," returned he with Surpriſe; "but who, then, are you?"

"Ser *Pantaleone degli Gambacorti.*"

"Ah! Ser *Pantaleone;*" and drawing up our Horſes, we cordially embraced one another.

"Pardon me, Ser *Pantaleone,*" ſaid he with the beſt Grace in the World, "if I recogniſed you not at the firſt; but your Habit is different, though your Appearance is wonderfully little altered ſince I laſt had the Pleaſure of ſeeing you, which was, you know, when I was a very little Boy."

"And a very clever little Boy, too," ſaid I. "It ſeems but yeſterday that I beheld you on your Father's Knee, chopping Logic with him, and then ſlipping down to recite a String of his Verſes to me with the prettieſt infantine Grace. Your little Siſter *Cornelia* promiſed to marry me, though I underſtand ſhe is now a younger Man's Wife. A lovely little Girl ſhe was! the miniature Prototype of your admirable Mother."

"Ah, don't name her!" ſaid he, with Tears trickling down his Cheeks. "The bare Sound of her Name makes her Loſs ſeem ever new! She was driven to her Grave by Cruelty, if ever Woman was! My Uncles were perfect Tyrants, and deprived her not only of her Inheritance, but of the Company of her Huſband and Son, which ſhe valued much more."

"And your Siſter?"

"They have compelled her into a Marriage which may be a good or bad one, for I know not which. To me ſhe is loſt."

"Your Father?"

"Is at *Venice*, printing his '*Amadigi*.' Ah, Ser *Pantaleone*, what a Poem is that! What a Noiſe it will make in the World! What Imagery, what Character, what Action! Allow me to repeat to you one or two Stanzas."

And, with the Tears yet wet on his Cheek, he began ſpouting with exactly the ſame Fervour as when he had amuſed me at ſeven Years old. I can't ſay I paid much Attention to the Subſtance of the Verſes, though they ſeemed to ſcan well enough; for my Mind had fled back to the Scene of noble Simplicity preſented in his early Home, before the excellent Meſſer *Bernardo* had been baniſhed from the Neapolitan States for his Adherence to his Benefactor Don *Ferrante*.

Many a youthful Eſcapade had I been delivered from by the brotherly, I might almost ſay paternal, Kindneſs of that beloved Friend, when, as an idle young Soldier, far away from domeſtic Influences, I was expoſed to many Temptations. Well did I remember

his feelingly pointing out to me the Danger of young Officers and Courtiers indulging in Games of Hazard, partly from Facility and falſe Shame, partly from Idleneſs, and too ſoon from Love of the Excitement itſelf;—ending with "The beſt Throw of the Dice, Ser *Pantaleone*, is to throw them clean away." I remembered, too, his warning me of the abominable Coquetry of Madonna *Silvia*, and averring that no Widow of thirty-two could have real Delicacy of Mind who would accept Love-gifts from a Youth of nineteen; nay, broadly hint to him that ſuch and ſuch a Toy would be to her liking.

Stars! what Sums did I expend in Serenades and Morning-Concerts beneath her Window! in Noſegays of the choiceſt Flowers! in Eſſences for her Toilette! in iced Peaches and candied Apricots for her Table! in Gold-fringed Breaſt-knots! in Treſſilas of Silver Twiſt!—to ſay nothing of a Set of coloured Stones, compriſing Comb, Necklace, Croſs, Heart, and Bracelets; which, though not indeed real Rubies and Sapphires, (as how

ſhould they be for ten Ducats?) yet were ſet in real—that is, Jewellers' Gold, and looked extremely well for the Money. There did, indeed, ſeem ſome Cauſe for apprehending that what, in this Inſtance, was intended for the Lady, was appropriated by the Maid. True it is that Madonna *Silvia* appeared in them in Public; but, in After-times, when our Day of Recrimination came, ſhe declared and averred to me (which I could not be ſo injurious to her as to doubt), that they had been sold to her by her Maid *Floretta*.

Anyhow, I was cheated, deſpoiled, and laughed at; which I needed not to have been, had I heeded Meſſer *Bernardo*. However, I then knew little of the World, and ſuffered myſelf to be led by the Noſe by a heartleſs Woman, who even perſuaded me to abandon the Profeſſion of Arms and ſue for Court Patronage, becauſe, ſhe ſaid, ſhe preferred Men of Peace; and yet, after dancing Attendance on the Great for many good Years, the Man I moſt truſted ſtepped

in and got the Place and the Wife I was toiling for.

However, while biting my Nails on this double Diſappointment, I obtained, through the Kindneſs of Cardinal *Ippolito*, the Situation of Gentleman Uſher to Madama *Leonora* of *Este*. This removed me from my old Sphere of Action altogether; and here was I, a Man little paſt the Prime of Life, falling in with the Son of my old Friend when he was juſt about the Age at which his Father had been ſo uſeful and kind a *Mentor* to me.

"Is not that fine?" ſaid he, when he had finiſhed his Recitation.

"Doubtleſs," ſaid I with a competent Air. "However, I would rather hear of my old Friend, juſt now, than of his Poem. What are his Intentions reſpecting yourſelf?"

"Ah," ſaid he, ſhaking his Head with a ruefulneſs that had ſomething comic in it, "I wiſh I could tell you they were agreeable to me. He ſays Patronage and Painfulneſs are twin Brothers, and he would by no Means have me dependent on the Great;

wherefore, in Purſuit of an honeſt Independence, he deſtines me to the Study of the Law."

"How!" ſaid I, "would you dance Attendance, then, at Court?"

"Quite otherwiſe," replied he; "my Taſtes are much ſimpler, I aſſure you.

Rura mihi et rigui placeant in vallibus amnes
Flumina amem sylvasque inglorius—

that is to ſay, I ſhould like to write Verſes in a Country Cottage. Juriſprudence has neither the Dignity of Philoſophy, nor the Charm of Poetry; and, to tell you the Truth, my favourite Reading is in Romances."

"Soho!" ſaid I, whiſtling ſoftly, "all your mighty Eloquence juſt now was in Defence of *Cynthio's* Novelle and the Decamerone!"

"Signor, you may laugh," returned he, biting his Lip to avoid doing the ſame, "but, rely on it, the Imagination requires its daily Meals, as much as do our Bodies.

I am not eating Cakes and Gingerbread all Day, neither am I always reading *Boiardo* or *Ariosto;* but yet I ſit down to my Repaſt on the Writings of theſe divine Men with pretty keen Reliſh, I promiſe you! I think my loved Father, whoſe Will to me is Law, (and quite as much Law as I want!) would be wiſer in letting me follow the Bent of my Inclinations, which run preciſely in the ſame Channel as his own, than in directing me to Studies I abhor. Juriſprudence I hate, whereas Poetry I love!"

"And Muſic too, I doubt not?"

"Hum,—I touch the Lute a little."

"And are not indifferent to Dancing?"

"Aha! 'Come ſi ballono a *Comacchio!*'" ſlipping his Feet out of the Stirrups, and gavotting, or rather pivotting on his Saddle, till I wondered he did not fall off.

"Doubtleſs, you have alſo been in Love?"

"Ser *Pantaleone!* your Inquiries become rather too ſearching—" and he coloured extremely.

"Your Pardon," ſaid I. "And how go Affairs at *Padua?*"

"Furiouſly. The Pupils of two of our Profeſſors, *Sigonio* and *Robertello*, are at Daggers-drawing, and have frequent Street Frays. For my Part, I ſide with *Sigonio*, who is an amiable Man, and a profound Ariſtotelian. Give me the Pleaſure of your Company this Evening, and I will make you acquainted with him. *Annibale di Capua* and I, who lodge together, are engaged to meet him in the Apartments of our mutual Friend, *Scipio Gonzaga*. Will you come?"

As I heſitated a little, he preſſed me more urgently, ſaying, with a gay Laugh, "You know what a poor Scholar's Portion is,—a bare Larder, a Bed without Sheets, Walls without Hangings, Shirts without Buttons, and Shoes that want mending. Concerning which, my only Reply is, give me an empty Larder, and a Cloſet full of Books; let me read a Romance while I dine, and I know not what I am eating. I need no Sauce but Salt;

and if my Bed be ſmall, I can go to it the earlier and lie in the Middle."

In ſhort, he won me over to accept his Invitation, which, after all, was to another Man's Houſe. When we entered *Padua*, *Dondi's* great old Clock in the *Piazza de' Signori* was juſt ſtriking the Hour at which one of the moſt popular Profeſſors concluded his Lecture; and the vaulted Footways were crowded with Students, not only from every Capital in Chriſtendom, but from *Turkey*, *Arabia*, and *Persia*. My young Companion nodded gaily to one and another among the Crowd; and preſently we reached a very handſome Lodging, where, having diſcharged our Vetturini, we aſcended a wide Staircaſe and entered a lofty Apartment furniſhed with Opulence, at the upper End of which a handſome young Man lay careleſsly flung on some Velvet Cushions, intently reading, while Wine and Fruit stood near him on a Silver Salver.

I raiſed my Eyebrows and ſaid ſoftly, "Is this the poor Student's Lodging?" On which,

Torquato burſt out laughing, and ſaid, "All is one. We Bookmen know both how to want and how to abound. I owe all to my dear Friend here—"

And, embracing the young Man, who roſe to receive him, he introduced him to me as the Signor *Annibale di Capua*. He it was that has ſince been made Cardinal.

CHAPTER II.

Of Meſſer Torquato's *firſt Introduction to a Court Life.*

SINES, Coſines,—Angles, right, obtuſe, iſosceles Triangles, right-angled Triangles—Rhombs, Spheroids,—Cycles, Epicycles,—Things that are and are not, that appear to be, and appear not to be,—Judgments, contradictory, contrary, diſtributed,—Ideas, ſimple, complex,—Definitions, Propoſitions, Syllogiſms,—Examinations, Degrees,—Stars, Satellites, circumjovian Planets,—Fees, Regulations,—Gowns, Caps, Sizes,—Prefects, Vice-prefects, Almoners—Profeſſors of Canon Law, Protonotaries—Ices, Jellies,—Fleſh-wounds, Rapiers,—Man found ſtabbed.

I believe all theſe and a great many other Things made up the diſturbed Dreams that infeſted my poor wounded Head, my firſt Night in *Padua*.

We had both had our Wounds featly enough dreſſed by a dapper Barber-ſurgeon, who, while applying his Strapping Plaſter, had told us the laſt Piece of News, to wit, that a Street Fight had occurred between the Partizans of *Robertello* and *Sigonio*, in the Courſe of which, *Sigonio*, coming up, had got his Face ſlaſhed with a Poniard.

My young Friend, who was one of his warm Diſciples, became much excited at this, and talked loudly about it afterwards when we joined an evening Party in the Rooms of Signor *Scipio Gonzaga*. Here, Philoſophy, Poetry, and local Politics were ſtrangely jumbled in Diſcourſe, and canvaſſed with much Heat. *Annibale di Capua* read a pungent Paſquinade on *Robertello*, the Author of which he would not give up, but which elicited Roars of Laughter; and I gueſſed from young *Taſſo's* ſelf-ſatisfied Look that he knew more

about it than he choſe to tell. Afterwards he, at the vehement Inſtance of the Company, recited pretty nearly a whole Book of his Father's forthcoming Epic, reſpecting which *Italy* was burſting with Curioſity; but in ſpite of the Plaudits it elicited, I confeſs I found it heavy, and thought it infinitely leſs agreeable than a Fragment of the "*Rinaldo*," which my young Friend even then had privately in Hand, and of which the *Signor di Capua*, having poſſeſſed himſelf of a few Sheets, gave us a Sample. Though immature and imperfect, there was a Fervour and Harmony in it which the Verſes of Meſſer *Bernardo* altogether wanted; and when I ventured to expreſs my Opinion to this Effect, aſide to Signor *Ceſare Pareſe*, he gave it unqualified Approval, ſaying it was the Production of Youth, but of a youthful *Homer*.

The following Day I viſited my Kinſmen, tranſacted my Affairs, was nobly entertained, and, at five the next Morning, was on my Paſſage down the *Brenta*, in a convenient Barge drawn by Horſes.

While at *Venice*, I ſought out Meſſer *Bernardo*, and found the excellent old Gentleman a good deal broken ſince our laſt Meeting, but full of his Poem, the Importance of which he could hardly be accuſed of over-rating, ſince all who had ſeen it in Manuſcript were accuſtomed to think of it as he did. When I mentioned my Rencounter with his Son, and ſpoke of the Figure he made in Society, the Colour roſe in the old Man's Cheek, for he loved the Youth dearly; but when I broached the Subject of his Poetry, he heard me with evident Diſtaſte, and ſaid ſo many ſage Things againſt the Purſuit of it, that I could not but be amuſed at his Diſpoſition to cruſh in his Son the Inclination which he, a Septuagenarian, was following to his Bent, though it ſurely was a more excuſable Predilection in a young Man than an old one.

I ſaw no more of my young Friend till two Years afterwards, when, to my no ſmall Surpriſe and Pleaſure, he made his Appearance at *Ferrara*, as under the Patronage of Cardinal *Luigi d' Eſte*.

He was now twenty Years of age, a moſt beautiful Youth, tall, ſlender, and ſupple in Perſon, graceful in Action, dignified in Demeanour, full of Life, Hope, Merriment, and of dazzling and acknowledged Genius. For, during the two Years I had loſt ſight of him, he had publiſhed his "*Rinaldo*" at the Inſtance of the moſt eminent Judges in *Padua;* and while yet inſpirited by the immenſe Senſation it created, he had conceived the Idea of what afterwards became the fineſt Thing he ever did, to wit, the "*Jeruſalem.*" From *Padua* he had gone to *Bologna*, where he lectured on heroic Poetry, and made a rough Draught of the firſt three Cantos of his immortal Epic. Thence to *Padua* again, to win new Laurels, and lay them at the Feet of Meſſer *Bernardo;* who with Rapture confeſſed himſelf as happy a Father as *Diagoras*, when he ſaw three Sons crowned at *Olympia* in one Day. He conſented to his abandoning the Law, and procured him an Appointment among the Gentlemen of Cardinal *Luigi*, which would afford him the

Competence and Leiſure neceſſary for him to improve his Vein.

Well do I remember his firſt appearing among us! Returning one Day from the *Belvedere* Palace without the Walls, where Madama *Leonora* then lay ſick, to my Lodging in the *Piazza Grande*, I there found awaiting me a young Man genteelly dreſſed in Black, who was contemplating very cloſely a ſmall Nativity of *Garofalo's* which I had lately bought, not becauſe it was by any means one of his firſt-rate Works, but becauſe it was a Specimen of our firſt Maſter that came within reach of my Purſe. Turning about, he falls upon my Neck, and cries,—

"Ser *Pantaleone!* here am I, you ſee, come to be one of you, after all that my Father ſaid, and that I have myſelf ſaid againſt Courts!"

I replied,—"Since it is ſo, you are welcome. *Ferrara* cannot but be honoured by the Reception of ſuch a Gueſt as yourſelf. You come, moreover, at a buſy Time, for our Duke's Marriage with the Archduchеſs

Barbara is to take place in a few Days, and we are preparing to receive half-a-dozen of our greateſt Cardinals, beſides the Ambaſſadors of *Poland*, *Venice*, *Florence*, and *Lucca*, the Duke and Ducheſs of *Mantua*, the Counts of *Mirandola* and *Novellara*, and a Hoſt of other diſtinguiſhed Perſonages. This being the Caſe, I fear you may have ſome Difficulty in procuring a Lodging; for ſuch Throngs of Satellites and Underlings are drawn together on this Occaſion, that even the inferior Accommodations, which are paid for dearly, are already beſpoken."

"I had ſome Apprehenſion of this," ſaid he, "for, of courſe, the Rumour of this Solemnity has ſpread far and wide, and I was eager to be in time for it."

"Well," ſaid I, "you ſhall dine with me, and afterwards we will ſee what can be done. Meantime, I am about to repair to Madama *Lucrezia*, and if you will come with me, we will chat as we go along."

"Am I fit to go as I am, think you?" ſaid he, ſomewhat eagerly, twiſting his Head

over his Shoulder, as if he would view himſelf all round if he could.

"You are *point-de-vice*," ſaid I, "and muſt, I think, have come by the Canal, for you have not a Speck of Duſt about you. I will preſent you to her Excellency as one of the Cardinal's Gentlemen, and, after that, you will make your own Way."

"Tell me ſomething about this Princeſs," ſaid he, running lightly down the Stairs after me; "I have written Verſes of Ceremony to the whole Houſe of *Eſte* at a Diſtance, but know nothing perſonal about them, ſave that they are great Patrons of Arts and Letters. Princeſſes are always beautiful, are not they? Will ſhe do to write Verſes about?"

"Her Excellency is a moſt admirable and charming Lady," replied I, "and you cannot do her a more appropriate Grace than by addreſſing to her ſome elegant and laudatory Sonnet. She and Madama *Leonora* may fitly be compared to twin Roſes on one Stalk; they are equally courteous, erudite, beauteous, and repleniſhed with womanly Perfections.

My auguſt Miſtreſs, I am ſorry to ſay, is at preſent drooping in Health, and unlikely to be able to take Part in any of the Wedding Feſtivities."

"There's the grand old Caſtle!" cried he, ſtopping ſhort, and gazing at it with Earneſtneſs. "Some awful Tragedies have been enacted in its Dungeons!"

"We don't talk of thoſe Things here," ſaid I quietly.

"Well, but which is the *Lion's Tower?*"

"That at the End of the Street. Come along, you will have plenty of Time for all our Lions hereafter."

"Aye, and among them, *Arioſto's* Houſe and Manuſcripts! Dear old *Arioſto!* I wonder if I ſhall ever make my Name ring in the World like his. I want to ſee your famous Library, and School of Painting, and Cathedral, and Churches—"

Here, the Throng in the Street prevented our keeping together awhile, and when we reunited, we were cloſe to the Palace Drawbridge.

The grand Court-yard was in a high State of Confuſion, in Preparation for the Tournament which was to take place in it on the fifth Day of the Eſpouſals. The Centre was being thickly ſtrewn with Sawduſt, and Carpenters were buſily erecting the Scaffolds for the temporary Theatre at the upper End. Everywhere Pages, Servants, and Workmen were running to and fro and joſtling one another; Soldiers were relieving Guard, Stable-keepers lounging about, talking to Grooms and Falconers, while here and there ſome Perſonage richly plumed, with Velvet Cloak, Gold Chain, and white Gauntlet-gloves, paſſed to or from the ducal Apartments.

As we went through the Suite of Rooms hung with Family Portraits, and choice Specimens of the early *Ferrareſe* Maſters, my young Companion continually plucked at my Cloak, with an energetic half-whiſpered "Whoſe is this?—whoſe is this?"

"Oh, that's a *Gelaſio*.—That's *Garofalo*.—That's *Galaſſo Galaſſi*.—Thoſe Freſcoes were

painted by *Giotto* on his Way through *Ferrara.*"

"This beautiful Woman!—"

"*Lucrezia Borgia,*—come along."

"And this curtained Picture.—Some rare Maſterpiece, ſurely! The Transfiguration, maybe?"

And reverently, but ardently, he laid his daring Hand on the Curtain.

"*Pian,—piano!* What are you about? That muſt not be touched!"

"What is it?"—

"Our laſt Ducheſs. The Duke does not chooſe to have her Picture removed,—though *ſhe* was! . . . . you underſtand? Huſh, huſh—"

He gave a quick, alarmed, intelligent Look, dropped the Curtain, and paſſed on. We found Madama *Lucrezia* ſurrounded by a Circle of Ladies and Gentlemen, ſome of whom were of high Quality. Her Excellency, who, like her Siſter, was a blonde Beauty, which gave her the Air of being much younger than ſhe really was, wore a Suit of rich corn-

coloured Satin, ſlaſhed with white, and guarded with Silver. She had a fine Jewel in her Breaſt-knot, and a ſmall Tuft of white and coloured Feathers in her fair Hair, the Treſſes of which were braided with Pearls. Altogether, her Appearance was magnificent and impoſing.

I could not but be aware that the Perſon and Carriage of my young Friend, ſeen beſide one ſo much his inferior in Externals as myſelf, muſt be highly advantageous to him; as, indeed, it proved. As we approached, he was eyed by ſeveral Perſons with Curioſity and Intereſt, which were not leſſened on my pronouncing to Madama *Lucrezia* the Name which he, though ſo young, had already made famous. His being little converſant with Court Life imparted an agreeable Deference and Modeſty to his Addreſs, without any awkward Embarraſſment; and I could perceive by the encouraging Smile of the Princeſs on my preſenting him to her, that ſhe was favourably impreſſed. She complimented him on his early Reputation, and avowed her Hope

that *Ferrara* might ſee the Fruits of his riper Genius mature beneath its foſtering Rays. To which he replied with ſome ſuitable *concetti*, and then fell modeſtly back.

She ſoon, however, called him forward again, and engaged him in agreeable Converſation; and being ſo intimately acquainted with her Excellency's turn of Mind as I was, I could diſcern that ſhe was at the Pains of ſhining before this gifted young Man, and of letting him perceive that her Mind was well ſtored with Learning and Knowledge. I need not ſay, that, when the Conference ended, which was not till ſhe had bidden him to her Converſazione, he retired with me to my Lodging, highly elated with his Reception.

During Dinner, I diſcourſed with him on many Matters reſpecting his new Life, concerning the Details of which, no one could be better able to give him valuable Information than myſelf. I told him who was who, and what was what; whom he ſhould conciliate, whom beware of; and, above all, recommended to him Prudence, Circumſpection, and Economy,

without expecting to be much heeded. For the young will ſtill be young: who will profit by the Experience of a graver Man?

Youngsters hate
What old Men prate.

After Dinner, we went in queſt of ſuitable Apartments for him; but Inns, Lodgings, and private Houſes were full to overflowing; ſo that it ended in my offering him, and his accepting with the beſt Grace in the World, ſuch ſorry Accommodation as I had for him, till he could find Quarters elſewhere. We took my good-humoured Landlady, Monna *Oneſta*, into our Councils; and, as I generally tabled at the Princeſſes' "*tavola ordinaria*," it was agreed that a light Bedſtead ſhould be introduced for his Uſe into a Receſs in my Sitting-room, for which at preſent I had very little Demand. We made very merry upon it; and he apologized a thouſand Times for the Inconvenience to which he was putting me; howbeit, I grudged it not, for the Love I bore to his Father. After-

wards, he went out by himſelf, and, returning towards Duſk, told me he had found his Way to *Arioſto's* Houſe, and ſeen his Buſt, his Manuſcripts, his Chair and Inkſtand, and had alſo attended Veſpers in the Cathedral, and heard the famous Echoes.

Then we went to the Converſazione, which, for Friendlineſs of Tone and Diverſity of Subjects, proved one of the moſt agreeable I ever knew. In the firſt Place, there were none but picked Viſitants; for her Excellency was very choice and faſtidious in her Intimates, and matched or contraſted them like the Colours of her Dreſs. Secondly, theſe favoured Viſitants included ſeveral newly arrived from foreign Courts, who gave Zeſt to the Converſation; thirdly, there was infinite Intereſt excited about the Details of the approaching Jouſts, Tournaments, Maſquerades, Concerts, and theatrical Performances which were to enliven the Marriage Rites. Characters, Groups, and Dreſſes were diſcuſſed, Jewels brought forth and exhibited, Draperies caſt, Diſguiſes ſuggeſted,

Dances walked, Tunes hummed and thrummed. All this was perfect Enchantment to young *Taſſo*, who, if he were charmed, certainly charmed Others by the Readineſs of his Fancy and amazing Fecundity of his Wit and Imagination. I remember Madama *Lucrezia* aſking him if he could ſing, and his anſwering, "Oh no, Madama!"—yet immediately taking up a Lute, careleſſly running over its Strings, and then warbling (for I never knew Singing that could more fitly be ſo deſcribed,) ſome impromptu Verſes on his firſt Sight of her in the Morning, when ſhe appeared to him as beautiful and glorious as the Sun. Good or bad, the Verſes *pleaſed;* and ſo I remarked to him as we went Home by Moonlight.

I was ſo buſied, during the enſuing Feſtivities, as to have little Leiſure for my young Friend, ſave at Night, when we were almoſt too tired to talk; however, through my Means, he went everywhere and ſaw everything. I ſay, through my Means, but it ſhortly became at the expreſs Command of

Madama *Lucrezia*, for ſhe took a kindly Intereſt in the young Man, and was much amuſed at the Fervour with which he deſcribed his new Impreſſions of a Scene ſo dazzling. He for his Part was in Fairy-land or Dreamland, Day and Night, for I can certify to his talking and ſinging in his Sleep loud enough for me to hear him through the Wall. Still, there were ſo many Newcomers in *Ferrara*, of vaſtly more Importance than himſelf, that he was but one among a Crowd, and if he had ſuddenly dropped out of Exiſtence, it would ſcarcely have been noted ſave by myſelf. For me, I was well pleaſed to have ſuch a frank, cheerful Creature in my Lodging, and troubled myſelf leſs than I might otherwiſe have done to get rid of him. However, as the Feaſtings waned to their End, the City began to empty; and through my Recommendation, or rather, that of Monna *Oneſta*, he got a pretty Apartment enough, conſiſting of Bed-chamber and Sitting-room in the Houſe of *Jacintha Goloſa*, Widow of the Duke's late Pantler, a

Man much given to Greed and Peculation, who was thought well to paſs, and yet managed to die poor; of whoſe Delinquencies the leſs ſaid at this Time and in this Place the better. There was no Need to carry on his Faults to the Account of his Wife, a ſtirring Woman as ever was, with good black Eyes of her own, and three ſmall Children. The Sitting-chamber overlooked the Canal; and, with its ſtriped Sun-blind flapping over the vine-covered Balcony, looked cool and pleaſant enough. There was a heavy carved Table, and an Arm-chair almoſt equally immoveable; alſo a worm-eaten but curiouſly inlaid Bureau, with many Drawers in it, which took my young Friend's Fancy at once, becauſe he ſaid it would be ſo convenient for his Papers. In ſhort, when Monna *Jacintha's* Litters, including a Child's Go-cart and ſundry Hampers of keeping Apples, were cleared out, the Lodging ſeemed habitable enough, and I was glad to ſecure the poor Woman ſo eligible an Inmate. Indeed, during his Abode with me, I conceived a Regard for him which

never decreaſed, but, on the contrary, went on increaſing to the End.

I remember that one Night I was awoke out of Sleep by hearing him give one or two Groans, and then rap ſmartly with his Fiſt againſt the Wall. Underſtanding it for a Signal of Diſtreſs, I haſtily went in to him, and found him ſitting up in Bed looking quite aghaſt.

"I'm a dying Man!" cries he.—"Fetch a Doctor!—fetch a Prieſt."

Inſtead of which, I fetched him a good Doſe of Cherry Brandy, which he haſtily ſwallowed without knowing what it was, till he had taken a good Gulp. Giving a deep Sigh, "I'm better now," ſays he, "but poſitively I thought I was dying; and I felt ſo unwilling!"

"Life is dear to the Young," ſaid I; "you ſhould not have ſupped on Peach-ice, ſo late in the Seaſon."

"It can't be all right with me," reſumed he, much perturbed, "to be ſeized with ſuch a Panic at Death;—but Life ſeems ſo pleaſant

to me juſt now! everything I ſee, ſo beautiful!—every Sound, Melody!—every Smell, Perfume!—every ——it can't be all right with me, I ſay! hey, Ser *Pantaleone?*"

And in leſs than a Credo, the young Fellow was aſleep!

"Ah," thought I, as I lay awake afterwards, (for it was December, and I had got chilled and could not get warm again,) "he and I ſee different Sides of the Tapeſtry. What to him is now all rainbow-hued, and rayed with Gold, will ſome of theſe Days appear, as it does to me, nought but Fag-ends and Fuſtian."

And then I thought how ſubdued to what it worked in, my better Part had become; how all the trivial Details of Court Dinners, Dreſſes, the Length of a Sword-knot, the Pile of a Velvet, the Fall of a Plume, the Cruſt of a Paſty, were the Impertinences that even diſtracted my Thoughts from my Prayers, without my taking the leaſt real Intereſt in them. And ſo I kept painfully pondering on the Vanities and Frivolities of

Life, and thinking I would some Day become a cowled Monk, till at laſt I began to conſider whether too heavy a Supper of Wild-boar might not be as provocative of diſtreſsful Images as Peach-ice.

All this Time, the gracious and excellent Madama *Leonora* kept her Chamber, confined thereto by ſevere Indiſpoſition. Her Name was frequently mentioned in the ducal Circle, in the Way of Inquiry and Regret; many lamenting that the Feſtivities were deficient in the Preſence of her who would have been their faireſt Ornament. I am not aware that *Taſſo's* Curioſity was at all excited about her, till one Evening, happening to approach him where he ſtood a little apart from the Reſt, hanging over Something that lay on a Side-table, I heard him utter in a low, emphatic, almoſt paſſionate Voice, the ſingle Word "Divine!"—and, caſting my Eye on the Object which thus abſorbed him, I ſaw it was the Miniature Portrait of Madama *Leonora*, taken when ſhe was a young Girl of fifteen or ſixteen.

"Who is this?" cried he hurriedly to me.

"Is it poſſible," ſaid I, "that you can aſk?—Madama *Leonora*."

"Ha!—How ſhould I have known?"

"Why, ſhe is as like to her royal Siſter as one Star to another."

"Stars differ from one another in glory.—Pſhaw! ſhe is no more like Madama *Lucrezia* than I am like you!"

"That Likeness was taken a long while ago. Wait till you ſee her Excellency."

"Was ſhe ever at *Comacchio?*"

"Certainly—Why do you aſk?"

He did not appear to hear me, but continued gazing on the Picture, like one entranced; drumming on the Table with his Fingers as if hammering out Rhymes to ſome mental Tune.

A Day or two after, all the gay Pageantry melted away as if at the Wave of a Magician's Wand, on the News arriving of the Pope's Death. Cardinal *Luigi* immediately haſtened to *Rome*, to take Part in the Election of the new Pontiff, accompanied by ſome of his

oldeſt and moſt truſted Attendants; but young *Torquato* was left behind with the inferior Members of his Suite, to employ or miſemploy his precious Leiſure in any Way he choſe. His Fancy, being warm with the Whirl of Pleaſure in which he lately had lived, found Vent for itſelf in a Variety of graceful Rhymes and Sonnets, inſpired by the mereſt, moſt trivial Occaſion; ſo that Madama *Lucrezia* could ſcarcely change Colour, or have a ſlight Cold in her Head, or loſe her Thimble, or break her Needle, without finding the Event verſified and embelliſhed with a thouſand claſſic Conceits; which, I am bold to ſay, were in the main ſolely worked out for the Purpoſe of mental Exerciſe and ſleight of Hand; but which Madama *Lucrezia* began to value ſomewhat beyond their Deſerts.

CHAPTER III.

Of Madama Lucrezia *and Madama* Leonora.

MADAMA *Leonora* being now convaleſcent, quitted her private Apartments as ſoon as the Wedding Gueſts had diſperſed, and reappeared among us in the *Belvedere* Palace. The Languor of recent Indiſpoſition had imparted additional Delicacy to her Complexion and Softneſs to her Eyes, while it excuſed the Negligence of a Toilette which boaſted not a ſingle Ornament, and conſiſted of a ſimple white Robe of ſome flowing and ſoft Fabric and a Treſſila of green and gold Network over her Hair.

Torquato, as ſoon as he ſaw her, whiſpered eagerly to me, "The very Counterpart of her Picture!" I made no Reply, knowing that the Judgment of a Boy, (and he was not much more,) is worth Nothing, and that the

excellent and ſtill lovely Madama had exactly doubled her Age ſince the Portrait was taken. It was notorious that ſhe had the ſweeteſt Mouth in *Italy;* and as a conventional Matter, of courſe, it would never have done for any one of her Suite to have implied or admitted that there was the leaſt Diminution of her Bloom; nay, there were thoſe who would probably have defended the ſenſeleſs Queſtion with their Swords; but I, for my Part, had long become a Man of Peace in the minute Affairs of Life, and held my Tongue reſpecting many Matters which my Eye could not but note. Hence I betrayed not by the ſlighteſt Movement of Lip or Eyebrow my Amuſement at the Fervour of Young *Taſſo's* Declaration, but waited till Madama *Leonora* was ſettled on her Couch with her various little Invalid Comforts about her, and till Madama *Lucrezia* had kiſſed and greeted her, and ſeated herſelf at her Side. I then, at the firſt encouraging Look, ſtepped forward and preſented my young Friend, who kneeled and kiſſed the Princeſs's Hand with the profoundeſt Reſpect.

She ſweetly expreſſed to him the Pleaſure ſhe had experienced in peruſing his "*Rinaldo*," and deſired to know on what Theme his Genius was now developing itſelf. With a Flutter of mingled Modeſty and gratified Vanity, the young Man replied that he was now engaged on the "*Jeruſalem Delivered*," which was as yet but roughly ſketched out. She requeſted to have an Outline of the Plot; he detailed it, and ſhe greatly admired the Conception of the Characters of *Clorinda* and *Erminia*, ſo beautifully oppoſed. She deſired to know whether their Love-ſtories were to have fortunate Terminations; he replied in the negative; ſhe pleaſantly chid him for this, and ſaid young Poets found ſuch a Luxury in imaginary Woes that they had no Mercy on the Feelings of tender-hearted Readers. He ſaid that ſooner than coſt her a Tear, he would recaſt his Poem or throw it into the Fire. She ſweetly begged him to do neither, but to be guided ſolely by the Bent of his own inimitable Genius, or *Italy* and the whole civilized World would ſuſtain a Loſs.

To all this did Madama *Lucrezia* liſten with manifeſt Pleaſure; and, opening a ſmall Caſket, ſhe drew therefrom ſeveral of the complimentary little Pieces *Torquato* had addreſſed to her, and gave them to her Siſter to read. At this Epoch, the Duke and Ducheſs entered to congratulate Madama *Leonora* on her Recovery; we Courtiers fell back; but before the Circle broke up, our Sovereign Prince's Eye reſted on *Taſſo*, whom he beckoned forward to inquire how he got on with his Poem. With great Reverence he replied, that ſince his Arrival in *Ferrara*, he had been ſo tranſported and carried out of himſelf by the dazzling Feſtivities of the Court, as to have been little able to make Progreſs; but that his Intention was, under favour of the illustrious Prince he had the Honour to addreſs, to make *Rinaldo*, the Anceſtor of the Houſe of *Eſte*, the romantic Hero of his Poem, ſecond in Place only to *Godfrey*. The Duke appeared pleaſed with this Notion, and made ſome Remarks on it ere he diſmiſſed him. In Fact, his Highneſs

liked well to think himſelf a ſecond *Auguſtus*, with *Virgil* on one Hand, and *Horace*, which is to ſay *Guarini*, on the other.

The next Time I met *Taſſo*, which was when I was full dreſſed and on my Way to a ſtate Dinner, he eagerly ſeized me by the Arm, and drew me aſide to hear him read ſome Stanzas he had written on the Occaſion of his Eyes firſt reſting on the beautiful Serene of Madama *Leonora's* Countenance, when, if Reverence and Wonder had not turned his Heart into Stone, he would have periſhed with a double Death.

Dreadfully afraid of being too late for Dinner, I haſtily exclaimed, "Double Death! why double Death?—excuſe me, my dear *Taſſo*, I have no Time juſt now for Explanations and Rejoinders, but will talk it over with you another Time."

"How does it ſtrike you at the firſt Hearing?" perſiſts he eagerly; "is it too forward? too preſumptuous? Can she forgive it, think you?"

"Aye, aye, Women forgive every Thing in

their own Praiſe," ſaid I; "let it be ever ſuch Nonſenſe."

"You think it Nonſenſe then?" cries he, ſtill holding on to me.

"My dear *Taſſo*, it is capital, capital! I ſhall be too late for Dinner. Adieu for the preſent."

And I eſcaped from him, hardly able to help laughing at his rueful Look.

Of courſe the Verſes were forgiven, as well as plenty of others that followed, ſometimes addreſſed to one Siſter, ſometimes to the other. They ſeemed equally charmed with his ſmooth Verſings; and continually engaged him, whether together or apart, in Diſcourſes on Poetry, Friendſhip, Love, Sympathy, Heroiſm, Self-ſacrifice, Fame, Glory, and ſuch-like Caſuiſtries, ſome of which I liſtened to with Pleaſure, while others appeared ſentimental and profitleſs. They took up ſo much of the young Man's Time, however, that it was wonderful how he got through the amount of Writing he certainly did, in the Way of Lyrics, Epiſtles, Dialogues, Diſ-

courſes, to ſay Nothing of his great Poem, and Heaps of familiar Letters to his Intimates at Padua. He was induſtrious, that Youngſter! I ſhould have wondered when he ſlept, had I not had him in my own Lodging, and known that he took out as much Reſt from an Hour's profound Repoſe as moſt Men would get in Half a Night. Such Learning, too, as he would pack into his mere occaſional Effuſions for the Hour! he muſt have ſtored his Cells with Honey and Wax when at the Univerſities, for there ſeemed no End to what he could draw out, little as he now repleniſhed them.

Thus, I ſay, he went on, to the infinite Content of both the Princeſſes, of whom he was now the choſen Friend; and their Eſteem for him went that Length as to induce them to cauſe him to be admitted to the *Tavola ordinaria*, which made many of the older Courtiers ready to split with Envy. They were already prepared to accuſe him of Pride, Vanity, Preſumption, Conceit, Pedantry, Taciturnity except towards his Betters, and a ſcore of

other Faults, beſides deſpiſing him for the ſcantineſs of his Wardrobe and the ſhallowneſs of his Purſe.

Indeed, this tabling with the Duke and Princeſſes carried ſerious Diſadvantages with it, independent of the Envy it occaſioned; for, ſimple and unoſtentatious as were the Youth's Habits, he yet needed to have finer Linen, either laced or fringed, than would otherwiſe have ſerved his Turn; nor was it always poſſible to eſcape Invitations to Games of Chance without giving Offence. The Princeſſes ſtood his Friends, however, in this Matter; frequently calling him from the Players to converſe with them, or giving him a ſmall Stake to venture in their Names.

It may be aſked, were they not already ſo ſurfeited with poetic Adulation as to be ſick of Sonnets and Laudations? Of the common Staple they were; but *Taſſo's* Verſes, beſides their uncommon Beauty and Harmony, had the magic Charm of Truth! His Raptures and Ecſtaſies were *real;* too real, unfortunately, to be ſafe.

I ſoon noticed that a good many more of his Sonnets were addreſſed to Madama *Leonora* than to Madama *Lucrezia:* ſhe ſeemed to occupy his Thoughts from Morning to Night. If Madama *Leonora* appeared in a Mantle of myrtle-green Satin, straightway ſhe was compared to a Lily-of-the-valley ſheltered by its dark green Leaf; if in a roſe-coloured Brocade, to the Pride of the Garden, a Moſs-roſe,—if in Jewels, to ſtarry Night, more beautiful than Day!—if in Saffron-colour, to *Aurora;* if with Flowers in her Hair, to *Flora.* If her Head ached, the Heavineſs of her Eyes gave them a heavenly Languor; if a Catarrh made her pale,

Non era pallidezza, ma candore!

and I almoſt think if it had likewiſe made her Noſe red, he would have found ſome claſſic Parallel for it.

One Day at *Belvedere*, on his ſhowing me a Copy of Verſes, and aſking if I could ſuggeſt any Improvement, I coolly took his Pencil from him and ſubſtituted the name

of *Lucrezia* for *Leonora*. He looked hard at me when he ſaw what I had done.

"You will get into a Scrape, if you don't take Care," said I.

"Do you think ſo?" ſaid he with Surpriſe, as if the Idea were preſented to him for the firſt Time.

"My dear *Taſſo*, I not only think it, but am ſure of it. You are young and unverſed in Courts. I have lived in them long, and ſeen much as a Bystander. The Envy and Rancour to be found in them are enormous, and you are drawing them on yourſelf, even by what is harmleſs and laudable; beware, then, of increaſing your Dangers by what is heedleſs and reckleſs."

"But I cannot transfer theſe Verſes to Madama *Lucrezia*, for they are inapplicable to her."

"Suppreſs them, then, and write her ſome that are applicable."

"But ſhe doeſn't inſpire me."

"Wait till ſhe does, then; only don't ſend theſe."

" Ah, Ser *Pantaleone !*—here are ſome good Lines ! "

" Piſh ! you can make good Lines when you will.—Don't be fooliſh. Be guided by your Father's old Friend."

He tore them in Half with the utmoſt Good-temper, and flung them over the Baluſtrade ; then caſt his Arm round my Neck and walked off with me, talking of his Father.

As we quitted the Terrace, I happened to look round, and ſaw *Claudio Bertazzolo* walking along the Path beneath the Terrace, and earneſtly endeavouring to piece together two Fragments of Paper, which, the next Inſtant, he thruſt into his Pocket. I ſtopped ſhort and ſaid, " *Claudio* has your Verſes ! He'll make Miſchief ! "

" I'll run after him, and get them of him ! " ſays *Taſſo*.

" Stay," cried I ; " he could not ſee you and me on the Terrace above him, and the pencilling was ſo cramped, I don't believe he can identify it. Better leave it alone — he *has* read the Verſes, and your reclaiming them

would only make him ſuſpect you thought them dangerous."

Torquato here began to chafe, and ſaid, "Dangerous or not, they're *mine*, and he has no Right to keep them."

"Well," ſaid I, "I know not that you can make a Grievance of it, when they were torn and thrown away. You or I might have picked up Fragments of Verſes in that Way with perfect Innocence."

"But not to turn them to Account and make Miſchief of them!"

"How do we know that he will?—Our own Miſgivings ſhow there was Something unſafe in them. Let the Matter be: only take Warning by it to be more cautious in future."

"Beſides," rejoined he, "where was the Harm in them, after all? What ſcores of Verſes have I avowedly written to Madama *Leonora*, that have been read and praiſed by all the Court!"

"Yes; only theſe were a little too warm for conventional Feeling."

"Mine is not conventional Feeling!"

"Pſhaw, my dear *Taſſo!*—"

"It iſn't, I vow!"

"Then it ought to be."

"Why?"

"*Why?*"

"Yes, Ser *Pantaleone.* I ſuppoſe you have heard of the old Adage, that a Cat may look at a King; and I humbly hope a Poet may love and admire a Princeſs, be ſhe who ſhe may, as long as he does not expect her to love and admire him in return."

"Dangerous Work, my dear *Taſſo.*"

"As long as the Danger is only mine, it ſignifies not; and I do not believe there is any. By-the-bye, I want to ſhow you the new Epiſode I have ſketched out for my firſt Canto,—*Olindo* and *Sophronia;* will you come to my Lodging, and hear it?"

"Oh no, I have to audit all the Princeſſes' Butchers' Bills for the laſt Twelvemonth!"

"Ah, what Bathos! Farewell, dear Ser *Pantaleone.* I am about to write to my Father, and will tell him you are as well and as proſaic as ever."

"Tell him, alſo, I wiſh I could impart a little of my Proſe to his Son."

He laughed and ran off, ſinging as gaily as a Bird; and I went my Ways muſing in my Mind whether Poetry or Proſe have the beſt of it in the long Run.

For, look you, Proſe pays his Bills, and keeps his Credit, and keeps his Friends, and lulls his Enemies, and digeſts his Meals, and enjoys his Reſt, and lives in Quiet. But Poetry cares for none of theſe Things, if ſo be he may purſue his own wild Fancies, that ſerve him for Meat and Drink and Fuel and Bedding; and as for his Foes, he bites his Thumb at them all!

CHAPTER IV.

Of Laura Ariente, *and of the Fifty Concluſions, or Points of Love.*

THERE was a very lovely Girl, named *Laura Ariente*, at this Time in Attendance on Madama *Leonora*, whom every one liked and admired, and who being well nurtured, modeſt, goodnatured and cheerful, I heartily wiſhed might become the Object of *Torquato's* Devotion in place of her exalted Miſtreſs. There had been a good many Paſtorals acted this Year at Court; as "*Lo Sacrifizio*" and "*Arethuſa*"; poor Things at the beſt, yet which, with ſplendid Decorations and Muſic, had paſſed muſter; and *Laura* had taken inferior Parts in theſe, and appeared in them to great Advantage. When I praiſed her, perhaps ſomewhat too broadly, to *Taſſo*, he burſt out laughing, and ſaid, "Are

you, then, caught in the Toils at laſt? If I had waited ſo long, I would have at leaſt ſelected ſome one better worth waiting for than that chubby-cheeked Damſel."

I ſaid, "Her Eyes are a good deal like Madama *Leonora's*."

He ſaid, "You might as well ſay an Owl is a good deal like a Porcupine;" and walked off.

However, I ſoon found that Count *Annibale Turchi* was in love with the Girl, and meant to marry her; ſo it was as well I had not further entangled the Web of *Torquato's* Affairs by getting him into Odium in that Quarter. Juſt after we had parted, as mentioned in the foregoing Chapter, I ſuddenly came upon *Claudio Bertazzolo*, with his Arm linked in that of *Pigna*, the Duke's Secretary, with whom he was in earneſt Confabulation. *Claudio's* Eyes looked uncommonly round as they met mine, but I took no Notice, though I could not help fancying that my imprudent Friend's Sonnet was the Subject in Hand. This worried me; and inſtead of going Home, I proceeded to

his Lodgings, where I found him, not in his Sitting-room, but heard him making a prodigious Buſtle and Stir in his Sleeping-chamber, where he ſeemed to be alternately ſtamping on a new Pair of Riding-boots, cording a heavy Box, and practiſing a Coranto with the Box for his Partner. On the Table lay a confuſed Medley of his Papers, open to the inſpection of any impertinent or miſchievous Chance-comer: and, as I knew that *Claudio Bertazzolo* or any others of that Clique would have glanced at them without Scruple, I juſt made free, as his Father's old Friend, to do the very ſame Thing, in order, look you, to ſee how far the Boy's Imprudence would carry him. Firſt I came to a Knot of ſtale Violets; then to a Bit of watchet-coloured Ribbon I recognised at once for Madama *Leonora's;* then to a Lock of Hair, which I was ſorry to ſee was hers too, or ſo like that I could have ſworn to it—how he came by it, he beſt knew, ſince it was hardly to be thought ſhe would give it him. After this, I inſpected ſome half dozen Madrigals and Canzone, which were

chiefly remarkable for this, that the Name of *Leonora* was ſcratched through wherever it occurred, and *Laura* ſubſtituted, with the Addition of *bella*, *cara*, or ſome other epithet to make it ſcan. This tickled my Fancy, the Artifice ſeemed ſo ſhallow; I thought I would touch up his Verſes a Bit, ſo took up a Pencil, and ſubſtituted for every Word that could be conſtrued *dangerous*, another of the ſame Sound but of ſafer Import; as for Example, inſtead of "Ardire, ſoſpiro, delirando, fuoco, amiamo," "Udire, reſpiro, ambulando, gioco, pranziamo."

I was juſt contemplating my Performance with a ſilent Grin, when *Taſſo*, haſtily entering, cries,

"*Coſpetto!* what are you about with my Papers?" then, ſweeping them haſtily up without obſerving what I had done, he thruſt them into the Bureau, and withdrawing one of them, ſhowed it to me with great Glee, ſaying,

"See what a capital Device I have hit upon for eſcaping Danger, if my Papers ſhould be ſeized in my Abſence!—I am off immediately

to *Padua*, on the preſſing Invitation of *Scipio Gonzaga*, and am going to take the ſix finiſhed Cantos of my '*Jeruſalem*' with me; but I ſhall leave theſe Perſonalities behind, now I have made them ſafe under Lock and Key." Saying which, he replaced the Paper with the reſt, turned the Key and put it in his Pocket. I thought the Lock a better Security than the Emendations, ſo let the Matter reſt; and was right glad to hear he was going to *Padua*, where he would undoubtedly be careſſed and run after ſo as to put all his Love-fancies out of his Head. I ſaid, "Have you Plenty of Money?"

"Well," ſaid he, pulling out a few Scudi, "this is all. But *Scipio* won't let me want."

"Nay," ſaid I, "don't begin your Viſit by borrowing of him. Rather than that, you ſhall be welcome to all I have about me, and we can ſettle it ſome future Time. As *Pliny* ſaid to *Quinctilian*, 'The Smallneſs of the Preſent will make it acceptable.'" So I gave him a few Lire, for which he thanked me moſt cordially, and then wiſhed him a plea-

ſant Journey. The Vetturino was at the Door when I went forth, and, before I reached the End of the Street, *Taſſo* trotted paſt me and merrily waved his Hand.

A few Months had paſſed, when, one Day, I ſaw ſome one in advance of me in the Street, whom, if it had not been for a ſomewhat more ſtaid and dignified Gait than was his wont, I ſhould have concluded to be *Taſſo*. He it was, however; for, on entering the Princeſſes' Reception Chamber, I found him bending his Knee to Madama *Leonora*, and kiſſing her Hand with Ardour; while ſhe, on her Part, was receiving him with a heightened Colour which ſhowed anything but Indifference. The next Moment he had riſen, and ſhe began to aſk him many Queſtions concerning his Stay at *Padua*, *Pavia*, *Milan*, and *Mantua;* at which laſt Place, it appeared, he had viſited his Father, whoſe Joy at ſeeing him, he ſaid, had been far more delightful to him than the flattering Attentions he had received from his old Univerſity Companions.

The next Day, I met *Manzuoli*, the Cardinal's Secretary, who ſhook off *Il Farfallone*, with whom he was walking, and joined me. I chatted with him for a While, and aſked him what Progreſs young *Taſſo* made in the Eſteem of his Patron and the Gentlemen his Attendants. His Reply was, "Everybody likes him; as how ſhould they do otherwiſe? Howbeit, the young Fellow has juſt gone to the Duke, foaming with Rage, becauſe he ſays ſome one has been meddling with his Bureau in his Abſence, and rummaging among his Papers, and he is reſolved to have Redreſs."

I ſaid, "Redreſs? what Redreſs can he get? He cannot make the Thing undone, if anyone has been ſo ſhabby as to ſearch and read his Papers."

"It is an unpardonable Offence, however," ſaid *Manzuoli*, "and I cannot wonder at his Anger, even though he gets no Good by it."

I ſaid, "He will get Harm inſtead of Good, and only make himſelf Enemies. Whom does he ſuſpect?"

Manzuoli ſhrugged his Shoulders, and ſaid,

"He has Enemies, as you know as well as I do; but 'tis ill mentioning Names." And ſo paſſed on.

It never occurred to me at the Time, that I might have created the Impreſſion the Bureau had been broken open, by the ridiculous Alterations I had made in his Verſes, for the Sake of making him laugh when he joined me; inſtead of which, having other Matters in his Head, he had locked up his Papers without looking at them, and the Thing had paſſed from me.

At this Time, the Paſtoral Comedy of "*Lo Sfortunato*," which had been for ſome Time in Rehearſal, was to be repreſented in the Duke's private Theatre; which was merely a Saloon fitted up with a Stage, Curtain, and a few Scenes. *Taſſo* ſate at Madama *Leonora's* Feet to witneſs it; and, as the Poetry was very poor, ſhe aſked him if he did not think he could do Something better in the ſame Way, in Conſequence of which, he ſome time afterwards wrote the "*Aminta*."

Meantime, however, the Court was con-

tinually in Admiration of the pretty Pieces he was producing in Honour of *Laura Ariente*, which were circulated from Hand to Hand, and on every Lip. She herſelf took the Homage mighty little to Heart, being full of her Engagement to the Count; and the worſt of it was that I knew, all the While, they were really written for Madama *Leonora*, and offered to her and read by her with that Knowledge, while *Laura's* Name was only uſed for a Colour. This was both wrong and highly dangerous; and the Matter was made very little better by his uſing preciſely the ſame Artifice with Madama *Lucrezia;* writing Verſes to her from Time to Time which were currently ſuppoſed to be addreſſed to Signora *Lucrezia Bendidio.* This nearly got him into a Scrape with one who was not too well diſpoſed towards him already, *Pigna*, the Duke's Secretary, who was paying his Addreſſes to *Lucrezia Bendidio*, and who, being a Poet himſelf, though a very bad one, conceited *Taſſo* to be his Rival in more Ways than one.

Now, theſe Verſes to the Signora *Bendidio* had ſo very little Impreſs of real Feeling in them, that they might juſt as well have been inſcribed openly to Madama *Lucrezia*, without the leaſt Offence in the World; and my Opinion was, that they would never have been concocted *at all*, whether to this *Lucrezia* or that, but to ſerve as a Kind of Counterpoiſe to the Verſes to *Leonora* and *Laura*. And this argued a Kind of Subtlety and Subterfuge in our young Poet, by no Means natural to him, and which I was very ſorry to ſee. Becauſe, where there's Myſtery, there's Something to be hid; and where there's Something to be hid, there's Something that had better not ſee the Light. And that's my plain Thought, for as old a Courtier as I am.

Approaching within Earſhot of them one Day, I heard Madama *Leonora* ſay, laughing, "You will certainly make him your Enemy if you pay her ſuch open Attention. Take my Advice, and make him your Friend and Partizan inſtead."

"But how is that poſſible?" ſays *Taſſo*.

"Oh! praiſe his Verſes."

"*His* Verſes!"

"Yes, his Verſes, bad as they are—he is very eaſily flattered about them. Do try to conciliate him."

Taſſo ſhrugged his Shoulders; but in the Courſe of a few Days, we were made the Auditors of a mock-laudatory Criticiſm on *Pigna's* Poetry, ſo delicately and cleverly written that he and his Friends took it for real Compliment, and were highly gratified by it, while in Fact it was Irony from Beginning to End. Again I ſaw Danger; but he was blind or reckleſs, and either could not or would not admit any.

At this Epoch, however, *Taſſo* could do no Wrong, for he was the Darling of ſo many Hearts and the admired of ſo many Eyes, that even his Enemies were obliged to be at Peace with him. There was a fine Show of Wit, one Evening, between him and the Signora *Orſina Cavaletti*, a Woman of Gifts as rare as her Beauty, who provoked him by

ſaying that Women were capable of deeper and more conſtant Love than Men. He took up the Glove with great Spirit, to the Delight and Recreation of all preſent, till at Length a Circle cloſed round them, hanging on the Lips of each in Turn. Madama *Leonora* took a fine Emerald from her Finger, to beſtow on the Victor; but neither would give in, nor could the Queſtion be decided by Vote; and even the royal Siſters were divided, Madama *Leonora* ſiding with *Taſſo*, and Madama *Lucrezia* with Signora *Orſina*, who, with a great many Words, which Ladies always uſe, and with very pretty Action and ingenious Application, cited *Dido* deſerted by *Æneas*, *Ariadne* forſaken by *Theſeus*, *Argia* ſlain for burying *Polynices*, *Artemiſia*, who drank the Aſhes of *Mausolus*, *Laodamia*, who burnt herſelf for *Proteſilaus*, with many other Inſtances more than I can count. To which *Taſſo*, after picking Holes in the Sleeves of moſt or many of the before-named Heroines, as that the Idolatry of *Artemiſia*, the Impatience of *Laodamia*, the Suicide of *Ariadne*, the Jea-

louſy of *Medea*, were no true and infallible Signs and Parts of Love, did proceed from Hiſtory (wherein I muſt ſay I thought Signora *Orſina* had the better Ground,) to Logic; and winnowed and ſifted the Cauſes of Things, with ſuch conſummate and maſterful Art, that opinions were divided as to which the Meed ſhould be awarded to. Signora *Orſina*, like another *Clorinda*, came down upon her Antagoniſt the Moment he ſtopped to draw Breath, with the notable Example of *Alceſtis*, ſelf-ſacrificed for *Admetus*, and withdrawn from Hell by *Hercules*. *Taſſo* met her with *Orpheus*, voluntarily entering the Gates of Hell to ſave *Eurydice*. Signora *Orſina* ſaid, that was only one Inſtance to ſet againſt many, and that either his Memory was bad or his Cauſe was bad: that everybody preſent knew he had a good Memory, and therefore it muſt be that he had a bad Cauſe. *Taſſo* laughed and ſaid that was a disjunctive Syllogiſm; and he would give her another: Either Women could not be proved to love better than Men, or Signora *Orſina* was no

Reaſoner. Signora *Orſina* was a Reaſoner. Women could not be proved to love better than Men.

I noted Madama *Lucrezia's* Colour vary a good deal during the Controverſy, and at length, when *Taſſo* received the Ring, ſhe abruptly said, "I wonder at you, *Leonora*; I had thought you truer to your Sex;" with which Words ſhe roſe and ſwept away from the Circle, followed by ſome of her Suite, myſelf among the reſt. On my reſtoring to her her Fan, which ſhe had dropped, ſhe ſaid to me in a low voice, "*Taſſo* would almoſt perſuade my Siſter that black is white;" and bit her Lip pretty ſharply.

The Duke and Ducheſs were at Play, and challenged her to ſtake, which preſently engaged her Thoughts in another Direction. On my returning to Madama *Leonora*, I found her and her Party arranging with much Zeſt the Preliminaries of a Defence of fifty Concluſions or Points of Love, which *Taſſo* declared himſelf ready to make publicly againſt all Comers. It was at length propoſed

that this Encounter of Wits ſhould take place in the Academy, which ſhould be turned for the Occaſion into a Theatre of Ladies and Cavaliers.

Ill would it become me, a Man without the leaſt Eloquence or Imagination, to give the Details of this fanciful and extravagant Performance, which, for the Time, occupied every one of the ſmalleſt Pretenſions to Wit or Senſe. Ladies as well as Gentlemen took up the Gauntlet, ſentimental Diſcuſſions were going on from Morning to Night, Precedents and Alluſions hunted up from old Hiſtories and Poets, till Nothing but Love, Love, Love, was heard of from one end of *Ferrara* to the other. It is enough to ſay that *Il Farfallo*, the Butterfly of the Court, had his Finger in the Pie and made the moſt of it. I was ſick of it, for my Part, and eſteemed it Folly. I don't remember one of the Concluſions, not I, nor took any Pains to get up any of the Arguments at the Time; I remember lending *Taſſo* the Money to get his beſt Coat out of Pawn, and giving him

a new Pair of fringed Gloves, for I could not bear that thoſe who could not call him ſilly ſhould call him ſhabby. And I remember Madama *Leonora* wore a pale lilac Suit ſhot with Silver, and looked extremely beautiful; and that Signora *Orſina* kept her Ground ſo well on the Queſtion whether Women loved more deeply and conſtantly than Men, that it was looked on as a drawn Battle, and *Taſſo* called her his fair Enemy ever after. In the Main, I am minded to think the Lady was in the right on't, but in the particular Inſtance, I conſider *Taſſo* to have ſupported his Cauſe with Health, Liberty, and Life. But he was one of a thouſand, and Heaven forbid there ſhould be many to run the ſame ſad Courſe!

CHAPTER V.

Of Ser Pantaleone's being placed in an exceedingly embarrassing Situation.

THE third Day's Controverſy having ended, with great honour to *Taſſo*, I haſtened, while the Academy, the Court, and the very Streets were ringing with his Praiſes, to congratulate him in his own Lodgings, where I expected to find him in a perfect Tumult and Ecſtaſy of gratified Pride.

Inſtead of which, there ſate the poor young Fellow with his Arms caſt upon the Table, and his Head upon his Arms, crying and ſobbing like a Child.

"Who's there?" cries he, looking up with his Face all ſmeared with Tears, "Ser *Pantaleone?* Oh, Ser *Pantaleone!* my dear Father

is ill and dying at *Oſtia*; neglected, pillaged, and deſerted by his Servants, far away from his Children and his Friends! — Here's a Sequel to my Concluſions! Inſtead of chopping Logic and bandying fantaſtic Speeches with all Comers, I would I had been many Miles on my Road to him ere this! I am about to repair the Evil as ſoon as I may, and have already ſent for a Vetturino."

I waited to ſee him off, conſoling and cheering him all I could, and doing him the moſt ſubſtantial Service in my Power, by giving him a little ready Money. He embraced me heartily, bade me convey his Grief and Duty to the Princeſſes, promiſed to write to me, and charged me to write to him.

In Place of a Letter from him, I got one ſhortly from the Doctor he had called in to his Father, telling me that Meſſer *Bernardo* was dead, and that his pious Son, after tending him with a Woman's Duty and Affection, Day and Night, was now experiencing ſo ſevere a Reaction as to be ſick in Bed, without Power to move Hand or Foot, but hoped

ſoon to be ſufficiently reſtored to return to *Ferrara.*

I ſhed Tears for my excellent old Friend, and felt drawn all the more towards his Son, by the filial Duty with which he had ſmoothed his dying Pillow. I remembered them in my Prayers, and thought a good deal on the Subject of Death; how that all muſt die, whether in Courts or Cottages, and ſome a good Deal ſooner than they look for or like; how that we are all growing older Day by Day, whether we look in our Mirrors or not, or are told of it by our Companions, or have it carefully concealed from us; how that, next to the Power of Death and old Age is the Power of Habit, which makes us fancy ourſelves the ſame to-day we were yeſterday, and able to do the ſame and be the ſame this Year as a Year ago, or the Year before that; whereas it is quite otherwiſe; and every little ſtiffening of the Joints, or attenuating of the Limbs, or ſtooping of the Shoulders, or dulling of the Faculties, which we are ſo apt to think accidental and vexatious, ought rather to be

accepted as merciful Hints that we are getting on towards being not quite ſo young as we were.

Having charged Monna *Jacintha* to let me know when he returned, a little Lad dropped in one Morning, to tell me he had come back overnight. I therefore ſought him immediately, and found him wan, worn, and utterly ſpiritleſs. He wept on my Shoulder, and I mingled my Tears with his, and had a long Talk with him about Meſſer *Bernardo*, he giving me all the Particulars of his Death, and I recalling many little Traits of him in early Life, which it ſolaced us much to dwell upon. After which I preſſed him to go out with me; but he held back. "Come," ſaid I, "we are reverſing the Parts of *Pliny* the elder and *Pliny* the younger; for I want you to walk, and you want to read." So he went with me to Church.

About a Week after this, the Duke ſummoned me to his Cloſet, where I found his Highneſs alone, and ſeemingly much chafed. He bade me cloſe the Door carefully; and

then, ſummoning me cloſe to him, ſhowed me a Scrap of written Paper, and ſaid, "Whoſe Handwriting is that?"

I ſcrewed up my Eyes, and looked narrowly at it, this Way and that, though I knew well enough whoſe it was all the Time; and at laſt said,—"It's a Queſtion to puzzle the Sphinx."

"You may at leaſt hazard a Conjecture," said the Duke, with impatience.

"Well—it has the Appearance of being —either—*Claudio Bertazzolo*'s, or *Torquato Taſſo*'s—unless, indeed, it be *Pinza*'s."

"Who writes not like either of them," cried the Duke, impatiently, "neither do they write like one another. You name truly the right Man along with the others—it is *Taſſo*'s."

"Indeed!" ſaid I, with a Look of Surpriſe.

"Evidently," ſaid the Duke. "Now read what he has written, and ſay what you think of it."

I read the unfortunate Sonnet, which had been torn and thrown over the Baluſtrade,

but had been carefully paſted together again, and ſaid, quietly,

" Here appears to be a ſort of Allegory."

" Allegory!" cried the Duke. " How make you out that?"

" It ſeems to be a Sonnet in praiſe of Honour," ſaid I; " he avers that he thirſts, he pines for Honour—"

" For *Leonora*," interrupted the Duke.

I looked aſtoniſhed.

He ſnatched the Paper from me, impatiently, and ſaid,

" How elſe render you?

Coſtei Leonora *co'l bel nome?*"

" Aha!" cried I, as if the Pun firſt dawned upon me, " an ingenious Play upon Words! —and truly, more ingenious even of your Highneſs to make out, than of the Poet to frame! One of thoſe witty Conceits, worth little or nothing in themſelves, on which young Authors are ſo fond of exerciſing their Invention—and a graceful Compliment, beſides, to Madama *Leonora*, who has been

pretty nearly ſurfeited with ſuch Incenſe from Childhood."

"Hark you, Ser *Pantaleone*," ſaid his Highneſs, ſternly, "here is Something a good Deal worſe than mere Compliment: this Youth, inflated and ſpoilt by the Condeſcenſion with which we have treated him, has dared to raiſe his audacious Affections to an Object whom it is next to Treaſon for him to think of, ſave as his Liege-lady—"

"On my Life, no," cried I, haſtily.

"Silence, Ser *Pantaleone!* You are attached to the young Man, and are ready to defend him at any Hazard; you are, however, a tried and faithful Servant of our Houſe, and I am about to enable you to give Proof of your being ſo. It is of import to our Honour that this Matter ſhould at once be ſeen to; according to the Reſult, the young Man will be dealt with ſeverely or kindly. He is now about to repair into the Preſence of Madama *Leonora*, who, according to my Arrangement, will ſee him alone. The Nature of the Interview muſt be watched: in the

Wall of the *Neptune* Apartment, and concealed by the Tapeſtry, are two Cloſets from whence may be both ſeen and heard what paſſes in the Chamber. In theſe Cloſets, which have frequently been uſeful for State Purpoſes, I intend to place you and *Claudio Bertazzolo*—"

"Ah!" ejaculated I.

"—Who will each give me, ſeparately, an Account of what you ſee and hear; and by the Correſpondence of your Reports I ſhall be enabled to judge of your Veracity."

My Soul recoiled from the Office. The Duke, ſeeing me about to remonſtrate, ſternly ſaid, "*Operibus*, *non Verbis*; are you preparing to diſobey me?"

Thereupon I remembered how futile it would be, as *Bertazzolo* would have the Game in his own Hands; and I replied, "No, my Lord," though I inly winced. Without another Syllable, his Highneſs coolly bandaged my Eyes himſelf, with his own Handkerchief, and led me ſome little Diſtance, when, without the ſmalleſt Notice, I found myſelf ſhut into a tight little Box, ſoftly

padded. Thereupon I took the Liberty of removing the Bandage from my Eyes, and found my Cell dimly lighted by a Couple of little Eye-holes, which I inſtantly availed myſelf of, and found myſelf overlooking a Chamber which Madama *Leonora* occaſionally, but not very often, occupied. She herſelf was ſitting on a Sofa, almoſt immediately beneath me, ſo cloſe that I could tell every Breath ſhe drew by the ſoft, gentle Riſe and Fall of her Lace Tucker, and count every Meſh in the Gold Network which encloſed her beautiful Hair. She was ſtringing Pearls on a fine Silver Thread, taking them one by one from a little Tortoiſe-ſhell Box which ſtood beſide her on a ſmall Ivory Table: her little Foot, ſlippered in white Satin, reſted on a Footſtool of crimſon Velvet; and, as ſhe ſtrung her Pearls, ſhe hummed a little to herſelf, "Come leggiadra, come vezzoſa," &c., then pauſed, reſted her Face a little while on her Hand in penſive Reflection, then reſumed her Work, with an Air more ſerious, without being ſad.

I felt like a dreadful Villain, thus lying in

Wait behind my auguſt Miſtreſs, to take Advantage of her in her apparent Privacy, and felt it Sacrilege to be looking on, even while ſhe thus in Silence purſued a trifling Occupation. How horrible did it ſeem, then, that I was neceſſitated to overhear and privately report what might be of the moſt fatal Conſequence to the two Perſons I moſt cared for on Earth!—and how yet more horrible to know, that even if I shut my Eyes and stopped my Ears, *Claudio Bertazzolo* was within a Stone's Throw of me, with equal Facility to ſee, hear, and report all, be it much or be it little.

On Reflection, I was as glad I ſhould be there to be a Check on him, as ſorry he ſhould be there to be a Check on me. For, glad as I ſhould have been to ſuppreſs or gloſs over Anything to the Diſadvantage of my royal Miſtreſs and my Friend, I knew *Claudio*'s Truth to be much leſs to be relied on than mine, and that for his own malicious Purpoſes he would make the Harmleſs appear bad, and the Bad appear worſe.

Likewiſe, knowing the high Tone of Feeling of both the Parties, I was greatly in Hopes that Nothing could occur to the Detriment of either.

Meantime, Madama *Leonora* continued ſtringing her Pearls ſo long (or at leaſt it ſeemed long to One in my Poſition), that I began to doubt whether ſhe would be interrupted at all, or would not rather finiſh her Employment, and retire to ſome other Apartment, like a Bird eſcaping from the Snare of the Fowler.

Juſt as Suſpenſe was becoming next to unbearable, I heard a tapping or ſcratching againſt the outer Door, which was the Mode whereby any Courtier ſignified a deſire to enter; and immediately Madama *Leonora* ſaid, in her ſweet, calm, gentle Voice, "Come in."

Taſſo immediately entered, bowed profoundly, then approached, then kneeling on one Knee, preſented her with a Noſegay of choice Flowers, ſaying,

"Madama, his Highneſs commanded me to convey theſe Flowers to the excellent

whiteneſs of your fair Hands, with his loving Greeting."

"I accept them with Pleaſure," replied ſhe; "and thank my good Brother for ſending them by you."

"Madama," rejoined the young Man, "you enrich by your Goodneſs One who in all Things but Gratitude is a poor Beggar."

"Why, are you going?" ſays ſhe, cheerfully; "cannot you ſtay and chat a little? I have Something to ſay to you."

He inſtantly pauſed, in an Attitude of profound Reſpect. I ſhould premiſe, that in what followed, his Voice, always harmonious, was mournful Muſic.

"Sit down, *Taſſo*."

He ſat down on a Cuſhion at her Feet, a few Paces off.

"Is there any News ſtirring to-day?"

"Indeed, Madama, I know not."

—"*Taſſo*, how changed you are! Inſtead of being the cheerful, entertaining Companion you uſed to be, you now deal only in Monoſyllables."

" Madama, I have loſt my Father."

" It is an irreparable Loſs, and one which it does you Credit to feel ſo deeply; but yet one that was liable to befal you in the Courſe of Nature."

" I find Nothing in my own Mind, Madama, that can receive Conſolation under a Loſs, from the mere Conſideration that it was in the Courſe of Nature."

" *Taſſo*, what ſhall I ſay to you! I want to cheer you, but you deprive me of the Means. What ſhould you yourſelf ſay to me if our Poſitions were reverſed?"

" For Mercy's ſake, gracious Lady, do not preſent ſuch a Reverſal of Poſitions to my Mind for a Moment! I cannot ſtand it."

" Nay, I *will* know."

" I would ſay—"

" Come, proceed — What do you fear, *Taſſo?*—you need not fear *me*."

" I would ſay . . . ' *Taſſo*—' " He burſt into Tears.

They were both profoundly ſilent for ſome Minutes. It was not difficult to judge how

they felt. For my own Part, my Eyes became ſo full of Tears, that I was obliged to wipe them repeatedly, and I liſtened with intenſe Intereſt for what ſhould be ſaid next.

" Go," ſhe ſaid at length, in ſtifled Accents, " this becomes too affecting to me. I am no longer capable of offering you the Conſolation I deſired."

" Madama — you are miſtaken — your divine Sympathy is the moſt exquiſite Conſolation my Soul is capable of receiving. For every heavenly Tear you are ſhedding for me, I would willingly ſhed the laſt Drop of my Blood."

" Go, *Taſſo* . . . go, dear *Taſſo;* I beſeech, I command you. I am not very well today, and have been too eaſily overcome. I would not have any One find me thus,—go, excellent young Man, and be aſſured that no Monument raiſed to your Father's Worth can be ſo precious as his Son's Tears."

Saying which, ſhe roſe in Agitation from the Couch, and, in ſo doing, overſet the little Caſket beſide her, the Pearls in which rolled

hither and thither; while thoſe which ſhe had been ſtringing fell from the little Table to the Ground a Pace or two off. Mechanically ſhe caught at them at the ſame Time that *Taſſo*, with an eager Spring towards them, would have saved her the Trouble. Involuntarily, his Foot touched her Hand, not ſo as to tread on it and mangle it, but ſtill ſo as to touch, and perhaps even ſlightly to hurt it. His face became ſuffuſed with the deepeſt Bluſh, he caſt himſelf on the Ground before her, caught her Hand with both his own, and kiſſed it paſſionately again and again, as though in Contrition for the Hurt he had unintentionally given it. Not a Word was ſpoken by either, but I could tell from her Attitude, and the varying Colour of her downcaſt Face, that ſhe was deeply moved. The next Inſtant ſhe drew her Hand from his, and with a Geſture of Farewell quitted the Apartment. Being ſtill on his Knees, he was no ſooner alone, than he flung himſelf all along on the Ground, with total Self-abandonment, and remained ſo for a Minute or two—then haſtily riſing, ſtood with folded Arms

a little while, as if to regain his Self-poſſeſſion, and then rapidly walked off.

My whole Heart was ſo engaged in the Scene and the Actors, that I forgot, for the Time, the Reaſon of my being placed where I was, and only gazed, liſtened, and wept, as a ſympathizing Spectator. I had ſcarcely come to myſelf, when ſome One behind me whiſpered, "Replace your Bandage," which I immediately did, and was again led forth. In a couple of Minutes, the Duke uncovered my Eyes, and I then found myſelf with him, not in his Cloſet, but in the Gallery adjoining it. He preſſed his Hand heavily on my Shoulder, as if for Support, as we proceeded to his Cloſet; and on the Way thither, we paſſed *Claudio Bertazzolo*, who glided by, looking as if Butter would not melt in his Mouth, though I was pretty ſure he had ſeen and heard all that I had, and reported it too.

Arrived in the Cloſet, the Duke caſt himſelf into a Chair, and then ſaid, "Now, tell me all that paſſed."

I ſaid, "My Lord Duke, allow me to reflect a little."

He ſmiled grimly, as though ſuſpecting I was going to prepare a garbled Account. I had no ſuch thought in my Head, however, knowing it to be uſeleſs; but the real Fact was, that having liſtened, not as a Spy, but as a deeply intereſted Party, Feeling had, for the Nonce, overpowered Recollection, and I could not, at the Inſtant, recal a ſingle Word.

A Minute or two, of intenſe Effort, reſtored to me the Whole, verbatim; and I at the ſame Time became aware that, apart from Tone, Geſture, and dumb Show, there was Nothing that could give Umbrage.

I told off the whole Dialogue, literally, from Beginning to End, without the leaſt Inflection of my Voice, juſt as a Schoolboy would run off his Leſſon.

The Duke ſhaded his Eyes with his Hand while he heard me, with what I feared was a ſiniſter kind of Smile on his Lips. Then, after a Pauſe, he raiſed himſelf from his half recumbent Poſition, looked up at me, and ſaid,

"Well,—ſo far correct—as far as bare Words,—without any Mention, however, of the Kiſſing."

"My Lord," cried I, "if *Claudio* ſaid the young Man kiſſed her Lips or Cheek, he lied like a Traitor and Villain!"

"He ſaid neither one nor the other," replied the Duke, drily; "neither did *you*, Ser *Pantaleone*, make any Alluſion to the Paſſion with which he kiſſed her Hand."

"Something got into my Eye," ſaid I.

"It was well, then, that I kept mine open," ſaid the Duke. "I changed my Mind afterwards, about putting *Claudio* into the other Cloſet, and thought it as well to make Uſe of it myſelf. I find you, as I expected, a faithful, though ſomewhat dry Reporter. Had *Leonora*'s Heart been aſſailed only by Tones as monotonous as yours, I ſhould be in little Fear for her, Ser *Pantaleone!*—But the Youngſter has the very Soul of Love in every Accent of his Voice—it is genuine! it is real!—"

"And it is reſtrained," ſaid I.

"Y—es," ſaid the Duke, doubtfully; "but

it is dangerous. Ser *Pantaleone*, you may now go."

"Have mercy on him, your Highneſs! He is young! he is good!—"

"He is the Honour of our Court!—But we muſt alſo look to the Honour of our Family."

"My Life on *his!*"

"Enough. I will care for him. Have no Fears."

And he waved his Hand, which was as much as to bid me retire. I did ſo, with a full Heart. And he aſſumed a reflective Air, which was occaſionally his Wont, when he was about to meditate ſomething Cruel.

CHAPTER VI.

Of Ser Pantaleone's *Breakfast al Fresco.*

WHEN a Prince, and that Prince an Italian, gets it into his Head that the Honour of his Houſe is affronted, or in any Way endangered, there is no knowing what may come next. You loſe Sight of your Man! What has become of him? No One knows. Peradventure he is ſick, or ſulky, or has abſconded from his Creditors, or has been ſent on ſome ſecret Miſſion of importance. No One knows, for no One inquires; till, ſome Day or other, he is found at the Bottom of a Well; or a Fiſh-pond proves to have its Secrets as well as the Lake of *Lerna;* or a Bit of his Hair or

his Cloak is perceived ſticking out of the Ground, and People ſearch and find his bloody Corpſe, and ſhrug their Shoulders, and go their Ways.

Beſides, there are other and quieter Ways of ſettling theſe Matters. Drugged Wines, poiſoned Gloves, poiſoned Fruits, Ices, and Sweetmeats, *Acqua di Toffania*, Trap-doors, Cheſts with Spring-locks.—

His Highneſs's firſt Ducheſs had been *removed*. That had not hindered him of winning a ſecond; a young and beautiful Archducheſs, too! What a mere Trifle, then, would be the removal of a young Poet, with no Family or Faction to ſupport him! *Taſſo* was, indeed, well born, his Connexions were excellent, but they would not take up his Quarrel. Beſides, *quarrel?* with a *reigning Duke?* Pſha!—

Altogether, I felt very uneaſy about my young Friend. He was endeared to me by his pleaſant Ways even more than by his noble Gifts; he was agreeable to me, intereſting to me,—I loved him. Beſides, my

Nature was tender;—though bred a Soldier, I had never drawn Blood in a private Quarrel, being of a placable and amiable Diſpoſition; had never bit my Thumb at a Man, never lain in Wait, never hired a Bravo. We had had no Occurrences of the Sort in our Family, which, indeed, made its Annals rather tame, but was agreeable to its Repreſentatives; ſince if we were not arrogant, we had certainly never given Reaſon for our Neighbours to call us cowardly. We were of the younger Branch of the *Gambacorti*, who had ſided with the *Este Guelfs* ever ſince the Days of *Eccelino da Romano*, and had never ſwerved in the leaſt Degree to the *Ghibellines;* yet were not, for that Reaſon, always trying to pick a Bone with them, treading on their Heels, or plucking their Beards. My Great-grandfather, *Gentile*, had even overlooked having his Head nearly broken by a Flower-pot being caſt down upon it (purpoſely), from the third Story of the *Palazzo Discaduto*, by the Heir of that Houſe, then in his ſixth Year; and had merely remarked, "By a Child's

being pert no Honour is hurt," inſtead of ruſhing into the Houſe, ſtriking off the Offender's right Hand, and burying it in a Flower-pot ; and yet he had ſo boldly fought the Turks that no Man dared accuſe him of Puſillanimity. It may be ſaid that I inherited his Diſpoſition—which likewiſe came to me, through my Mother, from the *Soavi*, who were chiefly Men of Peace, and addicted to the Patronage and Cultivation of Letters.

Now, as I came forth from the Duke's Cloſet, I noted without noting, if One may ſay ſo, a Fold in the Curtain over the Door that looked uncommonly fat and full, which I afterwards extremely regretted I had not pricked with my Sword, for I was perſuaded that if I had, I ſhould have heard a little Squeak. In fact, Events gave me Reaſon to ſuſpect that it was highly probable the Duke, who had been playing the Spy, had in his Turn been ſpied by that Monkey Page *Maddalo*, or him whom we were accuſtomed to call *Brunello*, on Account of his miſchievous,

impiſh Tricks. How elſe ſhould what was known only to the Duke and to me, who had every Motive for keeping our own Counſel, creep out and become the Theme of Court Goſſips, *Il Farfallo* and others, maliciouſly diſtorted and exaggerated?

Thus, it became whiſpered about, that *Taſſo* had kiſſed the Princeſs in the Duke's Preſence; which was and yet was not true; the Duke being behind the Tapeſtry, which was not as though the Liberty had been taken before his Face; and, beſides, he had but kiſſed her Hand, which was done twenty Times a Day by one or another.

However, I no ſooner heard the Story from the ſneering Lips of *Aſcanio Geraldini* than I contradicted it flatly to his Face, averring it neither was nor could be true; and, having put him down, I poſted off to *Taſſo* himſelf, whom I found ſcribbling with all his Might.

He coloured up when he ſaw me, concealing what he was writing under ſome other Papers, ſo inartificially that if my Curioſity

had made it worth my while to examine it, I could have drawn it forth with the utmoſt Eaſe, the Moment his Back was turned. It was this awkward Way of attempting to hide a Myſtery when he had one, juſt ſo as to draw One's Attention to it, which ſo much provoked me with him. He was too guileleſs for a Courtier; being as tranſparent as *Monteſino*'s glaſs Caſtle, while he fancied himſelf as impenetrable as the ſaid *Monteſino*'s Subterrene: and this was inceſſantly taken advantage of by thoſe who had not a Quarter of his Senſe.

He ſaid, "Ha, Ser *Pantaleone!* you are early this Morning."

I replied, "I am, purpoſely, for I wanted to find you at Home, and when People are hawking, fowling, or in Church, ſo that we ſhall not be interrupted. An awkward Report of you has got about, which may do you great Damage, unleſs you take care to prove, even oſtentatiouſly, by the ſcrupulouſneſs of your Conduct, that it was, as I am ſure it muſt have been, unfounded."

He ſaid, ſomewhat excited, "What can you mean?"

"The Story goes," replied I, bluntly, "that you have kiſſed Madama *Leonora*."

He turned red, and burſt out laughing. "Who has dared ſet that about?" cried he.

"Nay," ſaid I; "I'm not going to give up Names. I heard it juſt now, and I ſuppoſe you don't doubt my Word."

"Ser *Pantaleone*, you are Truth itſelf. You muſt name the Man, however, for I muſt drive the Lie down his Throat."

"Firſt,—*is* it a Lie?"

"Ah! how I wiſh it were not!"

"*Taſſo!* your Imprudence literally petrifies me! How *can* you be ſo mad? ſo fooliſh?"

"What did you queſtion me for, if you did not want to hear the Truth? I ſhould not have ſaid ſo to Everybody, but I thought I might to *you*."

"Ah, *Torquato*, my dear Fellow, I don't want ſuch Confidences as theſe. You ought not to whiſper them even to your own Heart."

"Love is a Tyrant, my good old Friend, and will not be fettered."

"You talk like a Boy and a Coward; every human Paſſion may be fettered by the *Will*."

"And *you* talk, my dear good old Ser *Pantaleone*, like One who has never known what Love is, nor ſeen him except at the Top of a Valentine, or in a Stage Play, tricked out in Spangles and Gold Paper. But tell me, for I am on Thorns to know,—has Madama *Leonora* heard this infamous Fabrication? Ah, what Pain it muſt have given her! Nothing but Blood can wipe it out."

"Juſt as if that would make her one Whit happier, ſhe who is all Humanity and Kindneſs! I have no Reaſon whatever to ſuppoſe ſhe has heard it; but if, as I ſuſpect, that little Imp *Maddalo* has picked it up, he may convey it to Madama *Lucrezia*, who gives him only too much Encouragement; and ſhe, ſtung at the ſuppoſed Indignity, may carry it to her Siſter, and—"

"Ah, horrible! you annoy me beyond

Endurance! I will myſelf go to Madama *Leonora* and tell her—"

"What? Nonſenſe, you cannot. Leave the Matter alone, and let it die out; only taking wholeſome Warning by it to quench a Predilection as abſurd as it is dangerous for a Lady, who, however adorned with every Virtue and Grace that can embelliſh a Woman and a Princeſs, is old enough to be your Mother."

"Old enough to be my Mother!" repeated he, crimſoning exceedingly. Then, quite nettled,—

"Ser *Pantaleone*, let there not be another Word between us. You have done it, now. Though my own and my Father's Friend, you and I muſt have a deadly Quarrel upon this. Chooſe your Weapon, and meet me at Day-dawn To-morrow, in the *Pra de' Fiori*, juſt by where the great Hawthorn and old Dog-roſe intermingle—"

"Hawthorn! Dog-roſe!" interrupted I, burſting out laughing. "My deareſt *Taſſo*, what a Place! I will meet you there, I

promiſe you, but it muſt be to eat Curds and Cream!"

"Ser *Pantaleone*—"

"Not another Word! Do you bring Appetite, and I'll bring Cates conforming. I am quite in earneſt, and ſhall like it beyond Meaſure, for I have a thouſand Things I want to talk over with you. If you love me, though, bring your Lute."

"You are treating me like a Child," (ſtill very huffy.)

"Nonſenſe, I love you too much. Let it be as I have ſettled it, I entreat you. I am engaged every Day of the Week and every Hour of the Day, and can make no Arrangement with you, if not this."

And, flinging my Arm about his Neck, I looked eagerly and good-naturedly at him; till, burſting out a laughing,

"Let it be ſo, then," cries he, with reſtored Good-humour. "A ſingular Character you always were, Ser *Pantaleone*, and a ſingular Character you always will be!"

"Aye, that I ſhall, I dare ſay," ſaid I

merrily; "I'm full of Faults and Foibles, I very well know, and the only Reaſon people put up with me is that they know I've good Intentions."

"Something more than that, my old Friend."

"Oh no, Nothing more, Nothing more. Adieu, adieu—I am off to the Barber-ſurgeon's to buy ſome Freckle-water for Madama *Leonora*."

And waving my Hand gaily to him, I ran off, laughing in my Sleeve.

I might as well have ſaid the excellent Princeſs was old enough to be his Grandmother while I was about it; for, in Fact, ſhe was ten Years his ſenior and no more, ſo that he had been reaſonably provoked by my Exaggeration, which had ſolely reſulted from my Deſire to laugh him out of his dangerous Predilection at any Price, without my having had ſufficient Reſpect for the Perſon of my auguſt Miſtreſs.

It was remarkable that the Ducheſs *Renée*, herſelf the plaineſt of Women, ſhould have given birth to two Daughters ſingularly

beautiful, and alſo ſingularly youthful in their Appearance as they advanced in Life; ſo that both of them became Objects of ſincere Paſſion to Men much younger than themſelves. For, not only was Madama *Leonora* the unqueſtionable Object of *Torquato*'s profound Idolatry, but Madama *Lucrezia*, her ſenior by a year, was about this Time ſued for in Marriage by the young Prince (ſoon afterwards Duke) of *Urbino*. And though State Reaſons, wholly independent of real Preference, undoubtedly cauſed this Overture to be made in the firſt Inſtance, when, indeed, his Highneſs had not ſo much as ſeen our Madama, yet directly he did ſo, he immediately fell in Love with her, being charmed with her Perſon, her Manners, and her Gifts. But this by the Way.

When I reached the Place of Appointment the next Morning, attended by a Foot-page bearing a Baſket, I found my young Gentleman there before me, and his Lute too, caſt under the Hawthorn.

"A fair Morning, my dear Friend," ſaid I.

"A fair Morning," returned he, leaving off biting his Nails; "but, do you know, Ser *Pantaleone*, the more I reflect on that ugly and very untrue Saying of yours Yesterday—"

"Hush, hush," whispered I, "don't let's quarrel before the Boy—keep that to the last; I've a score of Matters to settle first.—Mind that Pie, *Rosalvino!*—My dear *Torquato*, do you happen to have a Clasp-knife or two about you?"

"*One* I have," says he, "but not two. Here it is, at your Service."

"Then we must 'turn and turn about, as the Tail said to the Snout.'"

"Whence got you that?" says he, grinning.

"I made it," said I. "What a Shame that such a Pasticcio as this should be invaded by such a Knife!"

"Send *Rosalvino* for another."

"No, I want him, to wait. And *I* don't want to wait."

"Ser *Pantaleone*, you are quite overcoming this Morning!"

"The Air inſpires me—ſo freſh and cool! I ſhould like to bathe ſomewhere. Now I have made an Entry, at laſt, into this formidable Cruſt, the Gravy-ſpoon comes into Play. Let me give you ſome Truffles and Morells. Here's an Egg. And a Bit of Ham. What will turn up next? The Liver-wing of a Chicken. There, that will do to begin with!"

"You are giving me too much."

"Nonſenſe! Now then, *Roſalvino*, take that Roll and Sauſage to yonder Bank, and don't let me ſee you within Ear-ſhot till you have finiſhed both. Fill the tall Jug, firſt, at the Spring, and put that and the narrow-necked Bottle within reach. Now depart; and if you look this Way till you are bidden, look to have a Bone or a Stone thrown at you.—My dear *Torquato*, you are fond of Romances; I am now going to relate to you a true one, while you eat your Pie."

"Pray begin," ſaid he, "I am all Attention. But why not have your Breakfaſt firſt?"

"Becauſe it would ſtick in my Throat,—or

elſe my Story would. I am going to relate to you a Love-ſtory of mine, which occurred when I was a very young Man, and conſidered not ill-looking by the Ladies."

So I told him my unfortunate Affair with Madonna *Silvia Millamanti*, and the Dance ſhe led me for Nothing, to which he liſtened with profound Attention.

"Now, ſee," ſaid I in Concluſion, "what Trouble, Expenſe, and Diſappointment this Attachment led me into! and ſee alſo, how indifferent to her I am at preſent. I thought I could not live without her—I find I can do ſo perfectly well. I thought I could never forget her—on the contrary, I very ſeldom remember her. I fancied the main Object of my Life was gone; whereas its real Buſineſs had not even begun."

"Ser *Pantaleone*," ſaid *Torquato*, after a Pauſe, "all this is exceeding well, but what has it to do with me?"

"Your Caſe ſomewhat reſembles what mine was."

"On the contrary, I cannot perceive the

leaſt Likeneſs between them. You fixed your Affections on a weak, worthleſs, worldly Woman; I have anchored mine on One who is all Virtue, all Sweetneſs, all Purity, all Conſtancy. Your Object was to win your Prize. I have never had the ſmalleſt Hope of doing ſo from Beginning to End; I may have wiſhed much, but I have hoped little, and aſked Nothing. As ſoon as you found you were ſlighted, you grew reſtive, broke your Chains, and diverted your Thoughts to another Channel. I love my Chains, and would not break them if I could."

"Which is very wrong and very ſenſeleſs of you," ſaid I.

"I muſt be Judge of that. I hurt Nobody but Myſelf; and if I prefer the Pain to being without it, where's the Harm and where's the Wrong?"

"There is both Harm and Wrong, and you may hurt Somebody beſides yourſelf."

"Never. This is no Affair of yours, dear Ser *Pantaleone*. You are no Poet."

"No," ſaid I, "and you make me glad I

am not one. For if a poetic Genius of the fineſt Order only ſerves to lead its Owner aſtray, or at any Rate does not keep him from being ſo led,—plain Proſe for me!"

"Proſe has nothing whatever to do with it. One may be as proſy as you pleaſe, without being one Whit the better Man."

"Granted; but is it not to be deplored that ſo divine a Light ſhould be only a Beacon to warn us of Breakers on the Coaſt, inſtead of a hoſpitable Fire to warm and cheriſh us?"

"It both warms and cheriſhes me. I can aſſure you, Ser *Pantaleone*, that if I could not tag ſo much as *amore* to *ardore*, I ſhould love the divine *Leonora* all the ſame; only I ſhould then be a miſerable, grovelling Wretch, fit only for her to cruſh with her Foot. Whereas, my divine Gift (for I *receive* it, therefore may praiſe it!) is the greateſt, the only Solace my unfortunate Caſe can know; it cheers me in Heavineſs, is my Companion in Lonelineſs, Wakefulneſs, and

Painfulneſs, makes me indifferent to Want of Money, Want of Kindred, Want of Friends, Malice of Enemies, purifies me, ennobles me, exalts me!"

"*Does* it purify you?"

"It does. Imagination is the one Talent I have received from my Maker, and I try to ſanctify it to his Service."

"Well, my dear *Taſſo*, if you are preſumptuous in one Reſpect, you are modeſt in another, to talk of having only *one* Talent—"

"I've no other, Ser *Pantaleone!*"

"You are a capital Fellow, there's no denying. But, forgive me, you nouriſh and foſter this unfortunate Paſſion inſtead of trying to ſuppreſs it."

"No, I don't." (Tears running down his Cheeks.)

"I think you do.—You think it tells well for a Poet to be a Prey to a hopeleſs, ungovernable Love. You think it makes an intereſting Feature in your fabulous Hero, and you have no diſlike to be a little Bit of the Hero yourſelf,—hey, *Taſſo?*"

"Ser *Pantaleone*, eat your Pie."

"Well, I will, now you are laughing. What an April-day Fellow you are! You think, becauſe I can't make Verſes, I have no Reſpect for Poetry. You are miſtaken: I have a very great Reſpect for Poets who make a religious and ennobling Use of their Art. I had the greateſt Reſpect for your Father, and I conſider you infinitely the better Poet of the two—"

"Ah, don't praiſe me at his Expenſe! I never like that."

"I will not, for I like your Feeling. All I would ſay is, that while I reſpect and admire the legitimate Uſe of the creative Power, I deprecate the exceſſive and excluſive Cultivation of the Imagination, which, unleſs kept under very ſtrong Control by Reaſon and Religion, becomes a Power that delights but deſtroys. And now, fall to, like a Man that is a Meal or two behindhand!"

We then diverted the Talk to Subjects which we could diſcuſs with Harmony; after

which, we cheerfully parted, I finding myſelf conſtrained to acknowledge to myſelf, that if he had a ſomewhat perverſe Will, he had at all events a very ſweet Temper.

CHAPTER VII.

Of the advantageous Marriage that Ser Pantaleone *propoſed to his Friend.*

ABOUT this Time, the young Prince of *Urbino* made his Appearance among us. He looked even younger than he was, being nigh as little as the famous *Dolabella*, whoſe Father-in-law ſo ingeniouſly complimented him on being ſo neatly tied to his Sword. Perhaps it may have been owing to this, that on his Excellency's being preſented to the Princeſſes, who were dreſſed preciſely alike—that is to ſay, in azure Velvet looped and fringed with Silver—we could perceive that his Eye reſted with moſt pleaſure on Madama *Lucrezia*, who was lower of Stature than her Siſter, even before he knew her by name; and thenceforth the Predilection

continued increaſing in a moſt ſatisfactory Manner, during the whole of his Viſit.

All that Time, Nothing was thought of but hawking or fiſhing Parties, Concerts, Dances, and theatrical Entertainments. The Conſequence was, that Goſſip and Slander held their Tongues for a While; Everyone, even down to *Maddalo* and *Bertazzolo*, being more agreeably occupied than in picking Holes in his Neighbour's Doublet. The Siſters, who had hitherto ſcarcely lived out of each other's Sight, and who were now about to be permanently ſeparated, grudged each Moment between the Betrothal and the Eſpouſals, that was not ſpent together; and ſo much Time was neceſſarily occupied in Arrangements for the Marriage, that *Taſſo* either was, or appeared to be, only one in a Crowd.

In the Courſe of the Summer, the young Prince arrived to receive his Bride; and the Nuptials were celebrated with every Pomp imaginable. Then followed Balls, Banquets, and Entertainments, which, whether for the Beauty of the Ladies, the Nobility of the

Cavaliers, the Richneſs of their Dreſſes, or the Coſtlineſs of the Receptions that were given them, entitled *Ferrara* to be juſtly celebrated as the Sovereign Miſtreſs of the Arts and Luxuries of Peace.

Among the hoſt of minor Minſtrels who piped their Lays on this Occaſion, *Torquato* naturally appeared like a Nightingale among Sparrows, or a Turbot among Sprats . . . hum! I am not good at theſe metaphorical Tropes; ſuffice it to ſay that the Canzone he compoſed in Honour of the Wedding gave the greateſt Satisfaction to the auguſt Party, who graced him with many Tokens of their Approval. Nor did the Princeſs of *Urbino* fail to tell him ſhe hoped he would viſit her princely Huſband's Court; to which he replied with ſuitable Expreſſions of Gratitude and Pleaſure.

But my Impreſſion is, that in Spite of the Compliments that paſſed between them, *Torquato* was thoroughly glad when the bridal Train departed. At any Rate, I found him, the following Morning, in one of the Garden

Pavilions of the *Belvedere* Palace, ſeated at the Feet of Madama *Leonora*, and reading a new Portion of his *Jeruſalem* to her with great Spirit, while ſhe and a Couple of her Ladies purſued their Embroidery.

This Way of ſpending the Morning ſoon became a Syſtem; and as the Afternoons and Evenings were chiefly wiled away in Converſation or Muſic, I conclude he wrote at Night. Thus, the Autumn inſenſibly ſtole upon us; and it came to paſs that one Day, we were all ſitting in the *Belvedere* Gardens, pretty much like a Group in the "*Decamerone*," when ſuddenly the Earth rocked beneath our Feet, the Sky became darkened, the River ſurged and ruſhed with a terrible Noiſe over its Banks, dreadful Rumblings were heard underground, and all Nature ſeemed reeling from her Seat. The Shrieks and Cries that would enſue on ſuch an Occaſion may be ſuppoſed; and when the Darkneſs began preſently to give Place to a diſmal Twilight, five-ſixths of the Company were on their Knees or wholly proſtrate; while *Taſſo*,

pale as Death, was ſupporting the fainting Madama *Leonora* in his Arms. If our firſt Thought had been of Ourſelves, our next was for her; we gathered about her, and would have relieved him of his Burthen, but he mutely repulſed us, and carried her himſelf into the Palace; there, deeply ſighing, he conſigned his precious Charge into the Arms of her omen, but remained, caſt on ſome Cuſhions near her Door, with his Face reſting on his Hands, till aſſured ſhe had recovered her Conſciouſneſs.

I dreaded this Diſplay of Feeling, but every One was too much troubled and terrified to notice it; indeed there was ſo much ſelfiſh and ſlaviſh Fear betrayed by many of the Men, that it was well there was at leaſt One amongſt them who took no Thought for himſelf.

The whole City was full of Wailing and Confuſion, for Houſes and Church Towers had fallen and cruſhed many People, ſo that thoſe who had ſuſtained no perſonal Hurt were in Trouble for their Relations. Add to

which, a Feeling of Inſecurity remained among us after the Shock had ſubſided; nor was this without Reaſon, for during the enſuing two Months, repeated Earthquakes took Place, ſo that we never felt ſecure of a Moment's Safety.

You may believe theſe providential Warnings ſent us all to our Knees; and in Spite of the Hazard of being buried under the falling Ruins of Churches, never were the Churches more crowded. Among the foremoſt of theſe pious Supplicants was our excellent Madama, who indeed almoſt lived in Church, making Prayers and Interceſſions at one Shrine after another in behalf of the afflicted City. She alſo beſtowed Candleſticks and large Tapers on various Saints, paid for ſpecial Services for the Dead, viſited, clothed, and fed the Poor, ſo that ſhe became regarded as little leſs than a Saint; and it was the Opinion of many that ſhe ought, after her Death, to be canonized. And it is my Opinion that many have been ſo who leſs deſerved it.

I uſually accompanied her on theſe Occaſions, when, as we paſſed through the Streets, the reverent and grateful People fell back on either Side to let her paſs between them, following her with their Benedictions. But, on one Occaſion, having breakfaſted with *Taſſo*, I was too late for my Duty, and was hurrying with him towards the Church, when we ſaw Madama *Leonora* approaching us from the other End of the Street. Certainly ſhe looked like a heavenly Votareſs, as ſhe was; her white Veil, gently wafted by the Breeze, flowed round her angelic Lineaments like a fleecy Summer-cloud; while her Attire, though of the ſimpleſt, was ſo truly becoming that it could not have been improved by the utmoſt Artifice and Study. She came along, thoughtleſs of her Appearance, winning her gentle Way like a light Bark among the ſmooth Waves, neither courting nor ſhunning Notice, but with her ſweet Regards faſtened on the Ground.

I heard *Taſſo* murmur, "How heavenly!" as ſhe approached; and a Day or two after, he

brought me ſome Stanzas which he told me he meant to interpolate into the ſecond Canto of his *Jeruſalem*, and that he wanted me to tell him my Opinion of them. One of them ran thus:—

'*Alone amidſt the Crowd the Maid proceeds,*
Nor ſeeks to hide her Beauty, nor diſplay;
Downcaſt her Eyes, cloſe veil'd in ſimple Weeds,
With coy and graceful Steps ſhe wins her Way
So negligently neat, one ſcarce can ſay
If ſhe her Charms diſdains or would improve,
If Chance or Taſte diſpoſes her Array;
Neglects like hers, if Artifices, prove
Arts of the friendly Heavens, of Nature and of Love.'*

Directly I read this, I perceived it was the exact Deſcription of Madama *Leonora*, and charged him with it. I told him *Guarini*, *Pigna*, and in ſhort every One would recogniſe it: at which he only laughed, and ſaid he did not care if they did.

After this, the Cardinal carried him with him to *France*; and, after their Return, ſent him with *Manzuoli* on a ſpecial Miſſion to

* Wiffen's Translation.

Rome, where he was honourably received. I now found that he correſponded with Madama *Leonora*, and indeed, with the Ducheſs of *Urbino* also; but, whereas the latter was merely a Correſpondence of Kindlineſs and friendly Offices, the other was of pure Friendſhip, not to ſay reciprocal Affection. I learnt that he was diſcontented with Cardinal *Luigi*'s Treatment of him, and deſirous of exchanging his Service for that of the Duke. To this End, the Princeſſes exerted their Influence with their Brother, it may be ſuppoſed with good Effect; and the Concluſion was that *Taſſo's* Attendance was transferred from the Cardinal to the Duke, with the Promiſe of his receiving from the latter a Salary of fifteen golden Crowns per Month—no bad Pay for One who had returned from *France* in the ſame Coat which he had worn when he went there!

In Truth, he now lived in Clover,—dining daily with the Duke, ſunning himſelf in Madama *Leonora*'s Eyes, and jogging on with his great Poem; in Addition to which, he now

wrote the "*Aminta*," which was forthwith put in Rehearſal.

"How comes it," I ſaid to him one Day, "that you who have ſo nice a Taſte in Dreſs, ſhould now always wear plain Linen, neither laced nor fringed?"

He ſmiled rather ſadly and ſaid, "Taſte is one Thing and Principle another. A Man who cannot even ſet up a Stone over his dead Father without pawning his few Moveables, has no Right to Lace or Fringe."

"Is that it?" cried I; "why, *Bertolazzi* ſays it is your Humour, — your cynical, ſatirical Way of ſaying, 'Dreſs fine, ye who can win no Attention by other Means: I am loved and careſſed, you ſee, without it.'"

"Let *Bertolazzi* ſay his Say. He muſt needs be barking or growling at Something. I would wear my Coat inſide out if that would keep him from meddling with higher Matters."

"But, my dear *Taſſo*, you have now fifteen gold Crowns a Month: no bad Salary."

"Not if it be regularly *paid*, Ser *Panta-*

leone. Beſides, I had contracted ſome ſmall Debts; and I hate Debt like Dirt."

"I have thought of an excellent Way for you to repair your Fortunes!"

"Aye? Pray name it!"

"*Rachaella* the beautiful Jeweſs, who inherits the Wealth of her Father the famous Phyſician, is going to be baptized next *Sunday*. Make Suit to her, my dear *Taſſo!* '*Domus et placens Uxor!*'"

"Truly, Ser *Pantaleone*, you oblige me by your very Chriſtian Propoſal! I happen to be Anything but fond of Jews and Jeweſſes, and ſhall certainly not ſeek a Spouſe in the Ghetto."

"She is ſuperbly beautiful, and as good as ſhe is fair."

"I am glad to hear it. *Fair*, indeed!—with a Skin as yellow as an Orange!"

"Have not you yourſelf ſettled it that

'*il bruno il bel non toglie?*"

"Brown is not yellow. Beſides, I object to the Hebrew Perſuaſion."

"She is converted."

"I object to the Hebrew Extraction."

"My dear *Taſſo*, it was the Extraction of the bleſſed Virgin!"

"Huſh, Ser *Pantaleone!*—you are now bordering on the Profane."

"I aſſure you, my Meaning was Anything but Profanity. By the Way, *Taſſo*, did you ever happen to read the Bible?"

"I am a good Catholic, Ser *Pantaleone*, as far as the reading prohibited Books is concerned, though, alas! far, far from being as good as I ſhould be."

"Well,—I ſhould have thought the Cardinal would have given you a Diſpenſation for the aſking."

"I never did aſk him."

"Nor ever feel any Temptation to read it?"

"Permit me to aſk, Have you ever read it yourſelf?"

"Well,—my Mother was about the poor Ducheſs *Renée*, who, you know, got into Trouble through her Calviniſtic Predilections; and I felt ſome Curioſity to read the Book

which had been the Means of caſting the Ducheſs into Priſon and ſeparating her from her Daughters. I have peruſed Portions of it, and certainly it is very fine,—very wonderful—carries mightily the Air of Inspiration with it."

"Of Courſe, only the Ignorant doubt its Inſpiration; but Man cannot eat of the Tree of Knowledge with Impunity."

"Well, I am ſurpriſed to hear you ſay ſo—you, a Student of *Padua* and *Bologna!*"

"Are you ſurpriſed I never meddled with the occult Arts? never ſought the grand Arcanum?"

"That's another Thing."

"Do you think that *Leo* . . that Madama *Leonora* has ever read the Bible?"

"You have ſo much more literary Converſation with her than I have, that you are the likelieſt to know. This much I am aware of,—that ſhe poſſeſſes a Copy of the Scriptures which belonged to her unfortunate Mother; but I believe ſhe only treaſures it as a Keepſake."

"Ha!"

A Day or two after, I ſurpriſed him in earneſt Converſation with Madama *Leonora*, and heard her ſay in a low Voice,

"No Matter—it is only Ser *Pantaleone*, who is ſomewhat hard of Hearing"—(which I was not—); "take it, my dear Friend, but uſe it with due Caution."

And preſſing a ſmall Caſket to her Lips, ſhe wrapped it in a Piece of green Silk and placed it in his Hands. He kiſſed her Hand, and reverently took the Caſket, which he concealed beneath his Mantle, and then withdrew.

Shortly after, on calling at his Lodgings, I found him immerſed in Study, and heard him mutter,

"This is wholly unfit for *Leonora* to read—her divine Faith will become clouded. Ha, Ser *Pantaleone!* you ſtole upon me unawares—you tread as ſtealthily, ſometimes, as *Maddalo*."

"My dear *Taſſo*, I ſee no Merit in wearing creaking Shoes. What curious little Caſket is this?"

"Leave it alone, I pray you!"—

"Well, I think I have ſeen it before."

"Poſſibly—though not very likely."

"It looks to me for all the World like one which Madama *Leonora* received from poor Ducheſs *Renée*, and which . . ."

"I ſee you know all about it. You are right; it contains the poor Mother's dangerous Gift to her devoted Daughter, who, however, like an Angel as ſhe is, has hoarded it like a Taliſman, without bewildering herſelf with its Contents."

"What *are* its Contents?"

"The Holy Scriptures . . . See—"

And he ſhowed me a thick little Volume, (brazen-claſped,) and bound in red Velvet, that was interſperſed with Notes, References, and Quotations, in the Hand-writing of the poor Ducheſs, whoſe Cypher was on the Fly-leaf. I looked at it over his Shoulder with Intereſt.

"See," ſaid I, "here is a Lock of her Hair between the Leaves,—and here, a dried Sprig of Myrtle,—and here, a Strip of Ribbon embroidered with her Initials. How intereſting a Keepſake to Madama *Leonora!*"

"Yes, but a very unſafe one for her to ſtudy. I have almoſt bewildered myſelf with what I have been reading in it.—*If* this be the Word of Truth—"

He pauſed, and looked upwards with a troubled and perplexed Expreſſion.

"What, then?"

"Why, then, Ser *Pantaleone*, our Churchmen have committed ſome ſtrange Blunders—I will not puzzle my Brains about them any more at preſent; let us go forth."

And, carefully encloſing the Bible in the Caſket, he locked the Caſket in his Bureau, threw on his Cloak, and ſallied out with me, chatting on indifferent Subjects.

As we entered the Street, Count *Turchi* paſſed us, and reſponded to *Taſſo*'s courteous Removal of his Hat by a very ſlight and negligent Inclination of his Head. *Torquato* kindled at this, and muttered to me,

"That's what I cannot brook! Who is *he*, that neglects to ſalute me as an equal? Surely, my Family and the reputation of my Father entitle me to that much, without ſaying Any-

thing of the Poſition in which the Duke's Condeſcenſion places me, which I candidly acknowledge is above my Deſerts."

I ſaid, "You are not vain, but you are Proud. Nobody takes leſs on himſelf for his own acknowledged Merits than you do, but you fire up if a Noble neglects to treat you as if you were on the ſame Level. You take Pepper in your Noſe too ſoon. This gives the Ill-natured an Opportunity of which they continually avail themſelves, of wounding you at a Point where they know you are vulnerable. Set one Thing againſt another. Set the Over-eſtimate, if you will have it so, of the Duke and Madama *Leonora*, againſt the petty Ill-breeding of thoſe who have nothing but their Titles to boaſt of. Is it not well purchaſed at ſuch a Price?"

"Ah, indeed is it!" ſaid he gladly; "but this ſame Pride, which has Something honeſt in it after all, is my beſetting Sin, and the one for which my Confeſſor ofteneſt puts me to Penance. Nor can I be ſo inſincere and ſo baſe as to affect Reſpect, which I feel not, for

thoſe who have only a Purſe and a Pedigree to value themſelves upon. As for the Arrogance of Men of Letters, let him laugh who wins! Why, now, there's *Guarini*, as proud, between ourſelves, of his very ordinary Poetry as of his very ordinary Wife—!"

Turning a ſharp Corner, who ſhould we come upon but *Guarini* himſelf, who looked as black as Night at us. I laughed as we paſſed on, and ſaid, "You have now made an Enemy of him, and he was not very friendly before. When will you learn to keep a prudent Tongue in your Head?"

CHAPTER VIII.

Of Ser Pantaleone*'s getting into Jeopardy.*

A ridiculous but highly dangerous Adventure occurred to me on my Return to the Palace. I was paſſing through the Gallery adjoining the *Neptune* Apartment, when it occurred to me to wonder whereabouts the Cloſet could be in which I had been concealed. The Gallery had on one Side a Range of Windows, overlooking the Moat, and the oppoſite Wall was hung with ſtamped Leather, over which were ſuſpended a dozen or more full-length Portraits of the Princes of *Eſte*. I could give a pretty good Guess as to the Part of the Gallery which correſponded to the Poſition

of the Couch on which Madama *Leonora* had been ſitting, and was paſſing my Hand ſomewhat curiouſly over the Leather Hanging thereabouts, when ſuddenly I felt the Panel behind it give Way, the Spring having been imperfectly ſnapped. I lifted the Flap of the Hanging, and perceived, ſure enough, the Entrance to the Cloſet; when, at the ſame Inſtant, as ill Luck would have it, the Door of the Gallery at the other End opened, and I caught a Glimpſe of a crimſon velvet Shoe, with large white Roſette, which I knew full well for that of the Duke. To ſpring into the Cloſet and ſhut myſelf in was the Work of a Moment; but the next Inſtant the Thought occurred to me, how I was to let myſelf out again, ſince I had not had Time to obſerve the Poſition of the Spring inſide. I inſtantly began to feel for it, but, to my immenſe Diſmay, could not find it! Here was a poſition for me Ser *Pantaleone!* The Duke had already quitted the Gallery, for I had heard him cloſe the Door oppoſite to that by which he had entered; ſo that,

even had it been ſafe to cry out, Nobody would have heard me.

I now, in conſiderable Agitation, ſurveyed the *Neptune* Apartment through the Eye-holes, but it was empty. A Lute and Muſic-book on the Couch, however, ſhowed that it had been recently occupied, and I hoped Madama *Leonora* might return, and that I might be able, without frightening her, to make her privately acquainted with my ridiculous Situation. What a pretty Story ſhe would have againſt me, though, of finding me occupying a Spy-cloſet overlooking one of her private Apartments! What a hateful Syſtem is Eſpionage! thought I; how degrading, how ſubverſive of Confidence! I wonder whether *I* have ever been liſtened to and ſpied upon by Anybody, when I leaſt ſuſpected it? Well, they never found me about much Harm, that's one Comfort.

See the Bleſſing of a good Conſcience! Happy thoſe who have never ſaid or done aught that could not ſtand the Light of honeſt Day! However, Dinner-time was

coming on, and my Appetite was not very bad, and I began to wonder whether I had any Chance of having a Dinner, or were to be pent up like a Rat behind the Wainſcot for the ſhort Remnant of my Days.

I began, ſomewhat nervouſly, to renew my Search for the Spring-lock, when I ſuddenly heard Voices in the Gallery. I liſtened eagerly to hear whether they were of Friend or Foe, and found, to my Chagrin, they belonged to the latter. In fact, *Claudio Bertolazzi* and *Aſcanio Giraldini* were diſcuſſing, after their miſchievous Faſhion, the approaching Performance of the "*Aminta*."

"He will be Pet of the Court, more than ever," ſays *Aſcanio*, "and all for what? Some ridiculous Flatteries of the Duke that he has introduced into the Speeches of his *Tirſis*, whom he means for himſelf. Fancy *Taſſo* in a Shepherd's Hat and Cloak, repreſenting himſelf as welcomed to *Ferrara* by a Man of moſt divine and auguſt Preſence, by whom, of courſe, he means his Highneſs!

'I ſaw,' ſays he, '*Phœbus* and the *Muſes*; and amongſt the *Muſes*, *Elpino* ſitting.' Pſha! piſh! who could not write better Poetry than that? *Guarini*, and even *Pigna*, might outdo him any Day. '*Inter ſtrepit Anſer olores!*'"

"He has propitiated *Pigna*," rejoined *Aſcanio*, "by a tinkling Compliment."

"He won't propitiate *Guarini*, though," ſaid *Claudio*, "by any ſuch ſhallow Artifice. What a Blight, what a Mildew is this Fellow! I only wiſh he were ſafe clapped up by the Inquiſition!"

Here I ſighed in a low Voice, which the Hanging ſufficiently muffled,—"O *Claudio! Claudio!*" which, being prolonged to a diſmal *ſoſtenuto*, made him ready to ſtart out of his Skin, and I preſently heard them both ſcampering out of the Gallery.

I ſhook with ſuppreſſed Laughter, but then became aware that there were Voices on the other Side of me. I peeped through my Spy-hole, and perceived the Duke and Madama *Leonora* ſeated on the Sofa beneath.

"Siſter," he was ſaying in his gentleſt Voice, "this averſion from Marriage is very ſingular, to ſay no worſe of it. You have Nothing to urge againſt this very advantageous Alliance but ſimply your preference for a ſingle Life."

"Is that ſo remarkable?" returned ſhe, in Tones equally gentle. "I am no longer young; I am perfectly happy, my dear Brother, in your Society, and in that of the diſtinguiſhed and intelligent Circle you gather round you. My Health is delicate, my Taſtes are quiet, and my Spirits, as you know, have been tender ever ſince my Separation from my beloved Mother and my dear Siſter."

"Still, theſe are no Reaſons, my Siſter, why you ſhould not carry out all your own Taſtes and Wiſhes in a Home ſo deſirable as that now offered to you. Your Court will ſtill be diſtinguiſhed for its Love of Letters, your Health will be cared for by a fond Huſband."

"Ah, ceaſe, dear Brother, I pray you—I am no longer young and ſprightly enough to inſpire real Fondneſs."

"Nay, is not *Lucrezia* a Year older than you are? ſee how beloved ſhe is by a Huſband fifteen Years younger than herſelf!"

"Dear *Lucrezia* is one in a thouſand, but I have always conſidered the Ages of the Parties terribly diſproportioned."

"Well, *Leonora*, your Mind ſeems invincibly made up; but allow me to tell you, my Siſter, that this Reſolution ſtrongly argues the Exiſtence of a prior and concealed Attachment."

"Fie, Brother! at my Age, one might expect to be ſafe from ſuch Suſpicions."

"You make your Age a mere Bugbear; in Reality it is Nothing more, for you are ſtill the handſomeſt and moſt graceful Woman in my Court, and are bluſhing, this Moment, in the Conſciouſneſs that my Accuſation is true."

"Only at your exceſſive and unfounded Praiſe, I aſſure you, Brother. Ah! let us continue to be happy as we are now! Dear *Barbara* is gone, you are hardly likely to replace her; you need a Woman to take the Lead in your Court; I am popular among

your People, I love your Society, I love my happy Home."

"Enough, *Leonora*," tenderly kiſſing her Hand, "I will never urge you to Aught againſt your confirmed and known Wiſh, be aſſured of it, my Siſter! Continue to be the Praiſe and Ornament of my Court, where every ſelfiſh Feeling naturally prompts me to retain you."

At this Moment, I aſtounded myſelf as much as the royal Pair by a loud Sneeze. Courtiers ought never to Sneeze; it is quite contrary to all good Manners; and I was ſufficiently puniſhed for my Breach of Propriety by the Diſmay it occaſioned.

"What is that? who is that?" cried Madama *Leonora*, riſing in Alarm.

The Duke, ſtarting to his Feet, with his Hand clapped on his Sword, darted a fierce Look up towards the Place in which I was enſconſed, but wherein I was, happily, totally concealed from View.

"Be at Reſt,—I will ſee to this," he haſtily ſaid to his Siſter; and, with a muttered Curſe,

he haſtily quitted the Chamber. Ah! I knew he would come immediately to the Gallery and open the Cloſet!—I remembered with a Shudder the miſerable *Ercole Contrario*, who had entered that Gallery and . . . never came back; and I ſeemed already to feel the Duke's Sword between my Ribs. I made a ſecond and deſperate Effort at the Door, which, as Luck would have it, yielded to me at the firſt Touch—I haſtily ſprang forth, cloſed it after me, ſlipped beneath the Hanging, and ruſhed from one End of the Gallery juſt as the Duke was entering the other.

As *Taſſo* ſaid afterwards of his *Erminia*,

"*Non ſceſe, no, precipito da Sella*,"

ſo might it be ſaid of me, that I ran not, no, I darted down the Stairs, along a Labyrinth of Stone Paſſages, into a low, vaulted Guard-chamber that happened to be unoccupied, where ſcarcely had I pauſed to draw Breath, when the Sound of

"Ser *Pantaleone!* Ser *Pantaleone!*" filled me with freſh Conſternation. Well I knew

the Voice for that of one of the Duke's Pages! I flung myſelf into the deep Embraſure of a grated Window in the Wall, and compoſed myſelf into the Attitude of one who had been ſoundly ſleeping for many Hours.

Enters to me *Angelo*, the Duke's Page.

"Ser *Pantaleone*," ſays he, "his Highneſs wants you immediately. Why, how now?" ſhaking me by the Shoulder.

"Hey? what?" ſaid I, waking reluctantly, and opening firſt one Eye and then the other.

"How come you to be ſo drowſy," ſaid he, "when I ſaw you juſt now darting down the Stairs like mad? The Duke requires you in his Cloſet, Ser *Pantaleone!*"

Moſt unwillingly did I riſe and walk off with as good a Grace as I could. Proceeding towards the Duke's Cloſet, I paſſed the curtained Portrait of the Ducheſs *Lucrezia* with an inward Shudder, and thought, I too might be about to be removed.

I ſaw by the ſiniſter Expreſſion of his Highneſs's Countenance and the Twitching of his Mouſtache that he was exceedingly irate.

"Ser *Pantaleone*," ſaid he, "look to the Door, Sir! and let us have no Eaves-droppers! —Draw near. You know the Cloſet in which I placed you for a particular Reaſon ſome Time ago?"

"Certainly, your Highneſs—That is, I know that you placed me in it, but the Way to and from it you concealed from me."

"Well—the Veracity which you diſplayed on that Occaſion aſſured me of your Fidelity. To you, therefore, I confide that its Secret has been diſcovered."

"Is it poſſible?" (with a well acted Start.)

"Yes, Sir—I was in Conference with Madama *Leonora* on private Affairs of Moment, when ſome one who was in that Cloſet ſneezed!"

"What Perfidy! what Ill-breeding!" ejaculated I.

"Ill-breeding, Sir?" repeated the Duke, twiſting his Mouſtache. "That Man's life, could I find him, would not be worth a Day's Purchaſe!"

"Ah!—who could it be?"

"That I deſire to aſk you, Ser *Pantaleone.*"

"My lord Duke, ſo many Perſons come and go—and I, unfortunately, have been but juſt ſummoned by *Angelo* from the lower Guard-room, where I was taking a Sieſta. But, what a perplexing Circumſtance! The more I think of it, the more it perturbs me! Who knows what may have been overheard in that Cloſet! Ah! what Miſchiefs our Anceſtors prepared for us in contriving ſuch Places! What Converſations may have been miſinterpreted,—what Actions may have been vilified,—what Characters may have been deſtroyed,—what Lives may have . . . "

"Silence, I pray you, Sir!" ſaid the Duke, riſing in extreme Perturbation, and taking a Turn up and down the Cloſet with folded Arms and knitted Brows.

Preſently, ſtopping ſhort before me, he ſaid abruptly,

"Can it have been *Taſſo?*"

"Impoſſible, your Highneſs—I called at his Lodging this Morning, and found him immerſed in Study."

"*Giraldini? Bertolazzi?*"

Here was an Opportunity for me to get two troubleſome Foes out of the Way! But I did not avail myſelf of it.

"Ah," ſaid I, "if your Highneſs could but have condeſcended to repair inſtantly to the Gallery, where you alone knew the exact Poſition of the Cloſet!"

"I did!"

"And found it—"

"Empty and cloſe-ſhut."

"Hum! *Could* any one have ſneezed?".

"I can credit my own Ears, Sir!"

"And Madama *Leonora?* Did *she* judge the Sound to iſſue from the Cloſet?"

"Madama *Leonora* knows Nothing of the Cloſet."

"Hold! a Thought occurs to me. Madama's favourite Greyhound, *Fidelio*, ſneezes preciſely like a Man, and may have been under the Sofa."

"Pſha! this ſneeze, I tell you, came from over the Sofa, not under it. Ser *Pantaleone*, you grow old and ſtupid—you may go; your Suggeſtions are worth Nothing."

I retired, devoutly thankful for having eſcaped the Duke's Vigilance, though he was down upon me as ſharp as an Awl;—and thinking that if *Taſſo* had been amenable to Suſpicion, I ſhould have been almoſt as much diſmayed as if it had faſtened on myſelf.

From this Time, however, he became the Object of ſilent but dangerous Scrutiny—the Duke's Eye was on him. This did not produce any evil Conſequences at firſt; on the contrary, while the brilliant Succeſs of the "*Aminta*" was freſh in the public Mind, *Taſſo* was the Darling not alone of the Court and City, but of all *Italy*. But his Cup of ſweet had bitter in it.

I noticed about this Time that Madama *Leonora* became very ſhy of him. This might have been in Conſequence of the Duke's having expreſſed Suſpicions of a ſecret Attachment. She knew he never forgot a Thing of this Sort, till he had tracked it out like a Slow-hound. *Taſſo* himſelf alſo may have given her ſome private Umbrage. Certain it is, ſhe publicly neglected him for *Guarini*, whoſe

Converſation ſhe cultivated, whoſe Adulation ſhe encouraged, whoſe Verſes ſhe liſtened to and commended.

Taſſo was nearly crazy with Jealouſy, Rage, and Mortification. I met him coming from her one Morning in a Tumult of Angry Feeling; he paſſed me without ſpeaking, and the next thing I heard was that he had departed from *Ferrara* on a Viſit to the Ducheſs of *Urbino*, who, having been unable to witneſs the Repreſentation of the "*Aminta*," had deſired to hear him read it himſelf.

I hoped this would change his Current of Thought, but have Reaſon to believe he only chafed, fumed, and bit his Chain during his Abſence. My Reaſon for thinking ſo is this —I received a Letter from him, inſcribed to me, but, directly I opened it, I ſaw he had addreſſed it to me by miſtake. It was to Madama *Leonora*, and, being ſo fairly (or perhaps unfairly) placed in my Hands, I could not deny myſelf the Gratification of greedily reading it; for our Family have always been fond, to exceſs, of reading

intereſting Letters, or Letters that perhaps might prove to contain Something intereſting, —whether addreſſed to ourſelves or to other Perſons.

CHAPTER IX.

Of Ser Pantaleone *reading a Letter that was not intended for him to see.*

"MADAMA," he began, "I have been thus long without writing to your Excellency, more from Want of Subject than of Inclination," (a falſe Excuſe, always, ſince when we incline to talk to our Friends we can always find Plenty to ſay to them; but this was written in great Bitterneſs, as well as all that followed.) "I ſend your Excellency a Sonnet, *as I think I recollect* having promiſed to ſend you all my new Compoſitions. It has little Reſemblance, indeed, *to thoſe beautiful ones* which I believe you are daily in the Habit of receiving," (he means from *Guarini*, of whom he is deſperately

jealous,) "and, indeed, it is as poor in Wit and Art, as I myſelf am in good Fortune. In my preſent State of Mind, it is impoſſible for me to do better, and I ſend it, as, whether good or bad, it will effect what I deſire. Do not think, however, that I have at Preſent ſuch a Dearth of Thoughts as to have any Room in my Heart for *Love*," (of Courſe not!) "it expreſſes not my own Feelings, or it might not have been ſo bad, but was compoſed at the Requeſt of a poor Lover," (poor *Taſſo!* one of your ſhallow Feints!) "who, having for ſome Time paſt quarrelled with his Miſtreſs, can hold out no longer, but is forced to capitulate and ſue for Mercy."

And then a Sonnet, the very Soul of paſſionate Entreaty and Self-upbraiding, far too real in its Grief to have been written for another Man.

Of Courſe I was not going to be baſe enough to injure my Friend, or to withhold his Letter from the Party for whom it was deſigned. No, no! his Secret was as ſafe with me as in his own Boſom; and, though ſhe had perhaps

got his Letter for me inſtead of her own, that ſhould not interfere with my immediately putting her in Poſſeſſion of what ſhe was likely enough to prize but too dearly, even at ſome Riſk to myſelf.

The Matter required delicate handling; I had broken the Seal quite innocently, had peruſed the Contents not ſo innocently, but ſtill ſhe would never know whether I had read them or not, ſince, even if I had *not* done ſo, ſhe might not have believed me. I reſealed the Letter with a Head of *Virgil*, a Keepſake of my Father's that I had never had Occaſion to uſe before—it was not, therefore, known for mine, and might well, from its Subject, paſs for a Seal of *Taſſo*'s, or for one that he had borrowed at *Caſteldurante*.

I placed the Letter, privately, where I knew Madama *Leonora* would ſee it, cloſe beſide a Poſy of Lilies of the Valley which her Page had laid beſide her Gloves, and left Things to take their Chance.

In Spite of my Diſaffection for petty Intrigues, I was beginning to find that they who

live in Courts can ſcarce keep clear of them. Hardly had I left the Madama's Chamber, when *Angelo* met me, with Anxiety on his Countenance, and told me the Duke required me immediately. My Heart palpitated like that of a Culprit, juſt becauſe I was Conſcience-ſtricken; and on entering the Duke's Cloſet, my Alarm was not allayed by ſeeing him ſtanding with his drawn Sword in his Hand, in a threatening and terrific Poſture, while *Maddalo*, trembling like a Leaf, was kneeling at his Feet.

This *Maddalo* was as thoroughly bad a Boy as I ever knew about Court, where at the beſt the Training is not very improving. He was about ſixteen, but looked two or three Years younger, being dwarfiſh in Stature, ſlim and ſupple as an Eel, of olivander Complexion, narrow Brows, black, impenetrable Eyes, and thin Lips; and whereas he might lay ſome Claim to *i Penſieri ſtretti*, he could make none whatever to *il Volto ſciolto*, having an Expreſſion as ſly, ſubtle, and malign as his Character. This Lad, not worth his Macca-

roni, was the Peſt of the Palace, always for Malice even if he got Nothing by it, and it was regretted by all but thoſe who made him a ſerviceable Tool that the Duke and Madama *Lucrezia* had always been partial to him, whether aware of his Baſeneſs or not I cannot aver. This I may ſay, that I always conſidered he had had Something to do with the Removal of our firſt Ducheſs, becauſe I found that Impreſſion to exiſt when I firſt was of the Houſehold, though that was after her . . . . Demiſe.

The Duke, in a low, quiet Tone, which he always uſed when dangerous, ſaid,

"Come, Ser *Pantaleone*, here is News. We have found the Spy in the Cloſet."

"Indeed?" cried I, my Heart leaping to my Lips.

"I found him there myſelf, Sir; and how often he has been there already, what he heard while there, and how he diſcovered the Spring, he is about to relate to us immediately."

"Or his Life is not worth an Anchovy," ſaid I, involuntarily uttering what I believed

the State of the Caſe, rather than playing into the Duke's Hands by frightening the Boy, who, however, took it ſo completely in Earneſt that he could for a while only gaſp,

"Altezza! Altezza!" holding up his claſped Hands for Mercy. The Duke, ſtill frowning, commanded him to begin confeſſing at once, or he ſhould have the Truth preſſed out of him with iron Weights; and ſat down with his Sword, ſtill unſheathed, in his Hand. I fancy, from the incoherent Medley of houſehold Scandal that the Page now ran off his Tongue, he thought the more he confeſſed the more acceptable; and at the ſame Time he forgot not his own private Enmities, for ſcarce a Member of the Houſehold did he omit to ſay Something ſcandalous of, ſave *Brunello*, *Aſcanio Giraldini*, and *Claudio Bertolazzi*. As for Madama *Leonora*, he ſeemed afraid of meddling with her, but *Taſſo* he ſpared not; yet all he alleged of him was ſo inconcluſive or manifeſtly fabricated as that I valued it not at a Walnut. From the Duke's immoveable Countenance it was im-

poſſible to gather whether he believed one Thing more or leſs than another. When the Page pauſed, he remained ſilent and meditative awhile; then ſaid to me,

"Ser *Pantaleone*, you perceive we are now ſpared the Trouble of making further Search for the Spy, and I will detain you no longer;" on which I, bowing, withdrew, but only into the adjoining Ante-chamber, where I remained Half an Hour before *Maddalo* came out and paſſed on without appearing to ſee me. The reſult of this Conference, though I ſay it not of a Certainty, was, in my Opinion, malign, and fatal to the Intereſts of *Taſſo*, whom *Maddalo* was inſtructed thenceforth to ſpy, to report upon, and to betray. I may be miſtaken, but I think I am not. Soon after this, I met *Taſſo* running up the Palace Steps. I cried, "So ſoon returned!" which was a ſtupid Speech, for he had been abſent ſeveral Weeks.

"Soon?" he repeated, "I ſeem to have been abſent long enough for little Boys to grow old Men," and ran up the grand Staircaſe.

When we were next together, he ſhowed me a fine Ruby the Ducheſs *Lucrezia* had given him, and ſundry other valuable Tokens of Friendſhip he had received from her and her noble Huſband; but he looked pale, thin, and careworn, and ſpoke with little Pleaſure of his Sojourn at *Caſteldurante*. He now caſt himſelf into the Labour of Compoſition with the moſt intenſe Zeal and Perſeverance, writing Day and Night, ſcarcely pauſing for Food or Reſt. I told him he was overdoing it. He ſaid ſadly, "It is the beſt Thing for me—the *only* Thing for me. My Pen is my only Miſtreſs—I love her! ſhe is true to me, employs me, elevates me, conſoles me—I only wiſh I had always been true to *her*."

I ſaid, "You talk now like a good and reaſonable Man. Only practiſe what you profeſs, and you will be as happy as you already are great. You will be no loſer, even in a worldly View, for the more you ſhut yourſelf up from the World, the more the World will follow you."

"The World's a Fool!" ſaid he abruptly.

"A great, big, bloated Bubble. I value it at what it is worth. But we have each a little World of our own, that is *all* the World to us, like the Landſcape around us reflected in a ſingle Drop of Water. In that little World of mine, Women have ever held a large Place. They are better than we are, Ser *Pantaleone;* kinder, truer, purer, more unſelfiſh, more imaginative, with quicker Fancies, with readier Intuition, with more Tact, with finer Perceptions, with holier Aſpirations. I conſider it the greateſt Privilege of my Life to have known my Mother, my Siſter, and Madama *Leonora.*"

"Thus formed for domeſtic Life, my dear *Taſſo*, I regret that you do not marry."

"Suppoſe I ſay the ſame to *you*, Ser *Pantaleone!* — Baſta! I am now in the Middle of a Combat between *Tancred* and *Argantes*, and muſt no longer leave them idle."

The ſoothing Kindneſs of Madama *Leonora* to him at this Time was extreme, and doubtleſs proved Balm to his Heart. Had it been leſs, he would probably have lacked Com-

poſure to finiſh his immortal Poem; which being at length wound up, to the infinite Admiration of all but his Ill-wiſhers, was ſubmitted by him, with his uſual Modeſty and Good-temper, to the Criticiſms of his Friends at *Rome.*

In Truth, I believe not there ever was a humbler-minded or gentler Man of Genius. Ah! what Irritations and Vexations did he not meekly take from captious Cavillers! What ſenſeleſs Objections! what abſurd Emendations! He, the Darling and Glory of all *Italy!*

One profeſſed to find Impiety in connecting Fiction with a religious Subject, and thought the Poem had better be ſuppreſſed altogether. Another recommended him, as a Friend, to leave out all about Enchantment,—it was dangerous to have any Dealings with the black Art. A third would have Nothing whatever to ſay on the Subject of Love; oh no! *Clorinda*, *Armida*, *Erminia*, and *Sophronia* were all to be ſcratched out. A fourth conſidered the Unity of the Fable would be

improved by the Omiſſion of the principal Hero, *Rinaldo*. A fifth would be content with the Suppreſſion of the Incident of the buried Perſon; a ſixth requeſted in the cooleſt Manner imaginable that he would omit the wonderful Ship; a ſeventh, that the Garden of *Armida* might be made more of a Gardener's-ground, devoted to Onions, Carrots, and Cabbages, inſtead of ſo dreadfully romantic; an eighth, that there might be no Alluſion to Kiſſes.

And theſe were your profeſſional Critics, I warrant you! Men who held their Heads altogether above poor original Geniuſes; Men who knew what ought to be done and what ought to be ſaid according to this Rule and t'other, and yet could not for the Life of them write Anything themſelves that any One but themſelves would take the leaſt Pleaſure in reading!

I think all this worried him a good Deal, ſweetly as he took it. He conſented to one Alteration after another, and even to making *Erminia* not only a Chriſtian but a Nun; and

ſaw one after another of his ſweet Fancies ſtripped of their Bloſſoms and robbed of their Bloom, their Boughs, and their Branches, till Nothing but a dry arid Trunk remained. He went, ſad yet not ſurly, to Madama *Leonora*, and told her to what he had yielded.

She would not hear of it! would not part with an Incident! a Line! a Syllable! praiſed All and Everything with a generous Woman's Warmth, and ſatirized his Critics with a Woman's Irony. "Ah, Madama!" he ſaid, "you have overpaid me"—and there were, if I miſtake not, Tears in his Eyes as he ſaid it.

But he had other Sources of Diſquietude. He told me in great Perturbation that during his Abſence from *Ferrara*, his Bureau had certainly had the Lock picked, and his Papers had been examined—Papers which in malicious or ignorant Hands might bring him under the Suſpicion, not only of the Duke but of the Inquiſition: Notes and Comments, in Fact, on ſundry Paſſages in Madama *Leonora*'s Bible which had appeared at Variance with the Doctrines of the Church.

I thought this a ſerious Matter, and helped him to ſift it out. We found that one Day when *Jacintha Goloſa* was gone to Maſs, and had left the Houſe in Charge of a little Girl, a Lockſmith and another Perſon, who wore a Doublet of ſhamoy Leather, had come and deſired acceſs to *Taſſo*'s Sitting-room, alleging Orders from himſelf which the Child was too ſimple to doubt. We proceeded to hunt up all the Lockſmiths in *Ferrara*, and at length found one, an honeſt, poor Fellow, who admitted without any Heſitation that he had, on ſuch a Day, at the deſire of a Man he had never before ſeen, who wore a ſhamoy Doublet, gone to ſuch a Street, and ſuch a Houſe, where, at the Direction of the Man, whom he concluded its Owner, he had picked the Lock of a Bureau, of which the Man ſaid he had loſt the Key. He added that, having done ſo, the Man paid him and ſaid, "You may go now," which he did, and had thought no more of the Matter, nor had he ſeen the Man ſince.

On getting him to deſcribe him to us, he

ſaid he was wall-eyed, had yellowiſh Teeth, and a Noſe ſomewhat flattiſh; in ſhort, the Deſcription no ways tallied with that of *Giraldini* nor *Bertolazzi*, though he might have been their Agent.

We therefore paid the Lockſmith for his Trouble, and begged him to look about for the Man, whom if he could find, and enable us to identify, we would gladly make it worth his While.

The Lockſmith retreated with a good Aſſurance that he ſhould be able to hunt him up; but, however, Nothing came of it. *Taſſo* was grievouſly perturbed, becauſe ſome of his Papers had been withdrawn; and he alſo mentioned to me incidentally, that a Letter to Madama *Leonora*, which it wounded him to think ſhould have met any Eye but her own, had reached her with a Seal different from that which he had ſet upon it,—*Virgil's* Head, which neither of them could identify as that of any of their Acquaintance.

I could have explained this to him; but

however, as he ſaid it would wound him ſo to know that it had met any Eye but hers, and as it *had* met mine, all through his own Inadvertence, I let it paſs, for why ſhould I want to wound him? I wanted *not* to wound him, and he had ſaid it *would* wound him, and ſo, as he ſaid it would wound him I ſaid Nothing about it.

There were ſo many other and greater Things to vex him, manifeſtly the Work of an Enemy, that I would not add to them this little Thing to vex him, coming from a Friend. Beſides, I did it inadvertently, and for his own Good, that is to ſay, for my own Information, I only deſiring Good to him; and a done Thing could not be undone, as we know was ſaid long ago by *Moſca Lamberti;* and it would be ſtupid and ſhameful to ſay Anything about it ſo long after, and ſo I let it paſs.

Meantime, Madama *Leonora*, witneſſing the Perturbation and Trouble of *Taſſo*, and conſidering that after ſuch exhauſting Study, and ſuch haraſſing Controverſy, and ſuch

Self-diſcipline in keeping down his too immoderate Affection for her, he was ready to die of Trouble and Grief,—did, of her heavenly Kindneſs and Commiſeration, carry him and me and two or three others with her to her delicious Country-ſeat of *Coſandoli*, where, remote from the Bickerings and Backbitings of an envious Court, in a Palace and Gardens as delightful as thoſe of *Armida*, we led a Life more innocent and improving than *Armida*'s, riſing early, hunting, hawking, fowling, ſnaring ſmall Birds and Fiſhes, floating in a gilded Gondolet with ſilken Awning on the ſweet River, playing Lutes, Flutes, Tabrets, and Dulcimers, (I myſelf could touch the Triangle indifferent well,) making Verſes, reading amuſing Tales, gathering and eating of Fruit, ſtraying among Beds of choice Flowers, dining on the Graſs, ſupping in the fancy Dairy-houſe, warbling Canzoni, writing Letters to this Friend and the other to ſay how happy we were,—and, in ſhort, enjoying ourſelves in a moſt delectable Faſhion.

I have always thought the Air particularly fine at *Coſandoli*, and the Water particularly wholeſome. The Fiſh, too, which one catches there in the River, is ſingularly well-flavoured, and the Poultry and Dairy-produce and Fruits, Legumes and Eſculents are, or at leaſt were, the beſt of their Kind. I never ſaw ſuch Medlars or Mulberries anywhere elſe. We had Milk warm from the Cow, and delicious little Milk-rolls hot from the Oven, and broiled Fiſh freſh caught, and Eggs juſt laid; and it is wonderful how much my Appetite improved while I was at *Coſandoli*. And ſo did *Taſſo's*.

CHAPTER X.

Of the Proceedings of the Ducheſs of Urbino.

I know not if I can ſay it was as wiſely as kindly done of Madama *Leonora* to give my poor troubled Friend this Haven of Reſt in the Midſt of his tempeſt-toſt Voyage. True, he was over-wrought, weary, and ſick at Heart; true, he had Enemies without, and Trials and Temptations within: but where there's no Strife, there's no Conqueſt; God does not willingly grieve nor afflict the Children of Men, nor ſubmit them to any Temptation that has no Way of Eſcape.

Taſſo loved Madama *Leonora* with all the Purity and Fervour his Soul was capable of, and that her exalted Goodneſs was calculated

to inſpire. *Taſſo* knew he could never win Madama *Leonora*, and fought manfully with himſelf to conquer a too engroſſing Love; Madama *Leonora* ſaw him ſtriving, wearying, waſting, and had Compaſſion on him, and did her beſt to recompenſe him by the ſweet Solace of her Companionſhip among a little Circle of ſelect Friends, all in Amity with him, and revering his Genius; but was this the Way to cure him? Ah, was it not bidding the poor Moth play round the Candle?

As I have ſaid, all our little Party were in Amity and Harmony, and no hidden Foe was among us to breed Rivalry and Jealouſy, and carry back an evil Report of us to the City. But, of Course, thoſe who were excluded were envious of us, and ſet about ſpiteful Reports of our ten Days at *Caſandoli*. However, theſe, being baſeleſs, deſervedly fell to the Ground.

How cloſe and noiſome is the Atmoſphere of a great City, when one returns to it from the gentle Gales, trickling Waters, Myrtle

Shades, Jaſmine Odours and enamelled Paſtures of a delicious *Villeggiatura!* Juſt ſo does the tainted moral Atmoſphere of the City offend us after the purifying Influences of Secluſion, though I ſay not there is never a Snake in the Graſs, nor an Aſp among the Fruit, nor a Scorpion under the Moſs-grown Capital. There was a lying Serpent even in the Garden of *Eden*. It is not every one that can, like St. *Paul*, ſhake off a Viper into the Fire. Howbeit, our Anceſtors did wiſely to raiſe Altars to *Feronia*, Goddeſs of Woods and Groves, and fable that her Votaries could walk unhurt over red-hot Coals; which was only ſaying, in their veiled, pretty Way, that the Lovers of calm Secluſion and Retirement could abide, unharmed, the fiery Ordeal of the World.

No ſooner in the City, than a Claſh of Swords! I heard a Boy, running along the Street, call in an excited Way to another, "Four Men have fallen upon one, and he has beaten them!"

"Who is it?" cries the other.

"*Torquato Taſſo!*" cries the firſt.

And ſo, ſurely enough, it proved.

—The Thing fell out thus. *Taſſo*, returning from *Caſandoli*, found his Bureau had again been invaded: the Duke, alſo, looked on him coldly, and treated him with leſs Conſideration than uſual. *Taſſo*, meeting unexpectedly *Brunello* and *Claudio*, heard them uttering ſome Words which led him to conclude they were Authors of the Miſchief, and were rejoicing in it. He ſtopped ſhort, and ſternly aſked *Brunello* what he meant by it.

Brunello, merely muttering "Al ſoccorſo" to *Claudio*, who paſſed on, faced about and ſaid, "What do I mean by it? What do I mean by what?"

"By what you were juſt ſaying," ſaid *Taſſo*.

"What was I juſt ſaying?" ſays *Brunello* evaſively.

"You know well enough. Had it or had it not Reference to me?"

"Hem!—Had it or had it not Reference to you?" ſays *Brunello*, juſt to gain Time,

and ſquinting over his Shoulder to ſee if Succour were coming. "Well, that's an odd Queſtion for one Gentleman to aſk of another. How if I anſwered—it had not Reference to you?"

"Then, though I had ſtrong Reaſons for ſuppoſing otherwiſe, I muſt accept that as the Truth."

"How if I ſaid it had Reference to you?"

"Then I ſhould inſiſt on your recalling your baſe Words, or eating them."

"How if I choſe not to eat them?"

"No more of this paltry Evaſion, Sir! To the Point!"

"Nay, an' if that be what you are driving at, take it with a Vengeance," cries *Brunello*, whipping out his Toledo and making a deſperate Lunge at *Taſſo*, who, having his Back to the Corner of the Wall, alertly parried the Stroke at the ſame Moment that three Men, Kinſmen of *Brunello*'s, came ſuddenly up and drew upon him.

"A *Taſſo!* A *Taſſo!* A *Brunello!* A *Brunello!*" rang through the Air at every

Claſh of Swords; and People coming up, running from various Parts, ſaw to their Admiration *Taſſo* keeping his Ground againſt all four till their Approach cauſed the Ruffians to make a haſty Retreat through the narrow Paſſage they had iſſued from, about three Houſes from the Corner; juſt over-againſt where the Cat's-meat Shop and the Maccaroni Stall have ſtood ever ſince I was a Boy.

The People raiſed a "Viva!" as *Taſſo*, merely breathing a little faſter than uſual, wiped a few Drops of Blood from his Sword with his Cloak, ſheathed it with a Smile, and nodded to them as he paſſed on. The People followed him down the Street, and one of them, an Improviſatore, who had been interrupted in the midſt of "The Generous Turk," cried out with Animation—

Con la Penna e con la Spada
Nessun val quanto Torquato!

—which was eagerly caught up, and has remained a Proverb among us even to this Day. To my Mind, he was worth two of *Horace*,

and would never have diſgraced himſelf at *Philippi*.

If I heard of this Occurrence with mixed Emotions of Pride in my Friend's Courage and Concern for his Danger, it is not ſurpriſing that the ſame Feelings ſhould be experienced by Madama *Leonora* in a ſtronger Degree. The Duke, alſo, was highly incenſed at the Outrage, and the Conſequence was that *Brunello* and his Partizans dared not ſhow their Noſes among us for a While; ſo there was Peace in the Land. For the Reſt, theſe little Outbreaks are always occurring in Cities; and of courſe the judicial Inquiry into the Affair came to Nothing.

It had for ſome Time been bruited among us that our Madama *Lucrezia* had not bettered her Condition much by Matrimony, but was living uncomfortably with the young Duke; and though I looked on this as one of the baſeleſs Scandals always rife among us, the more ſo as *Taſſo* had ſaid Nothing about it on his Return from *Caſtelduranté*, yet now, when I mentioned it to him, he ſhrugged his

Shoulders and ſaid 'twas ill meddling in the Affairs of Man and Wife—he believed there were Faults upon both Sides: they had been kinder to him than they were to each other.

Rather ſuddenly the Ducheſs appeared among us when we were leaſt looking for her, —came to ſtay; impelled thereto, it would ſeem, by the Apprehenſion that Means for her Removal by Poiſon had been concerted. As it could not be made clear to the Duke that this impreſſion reſulted from Aught but her own too vivid Fancy, and as, moreover, his Highneſs had his own peculiar Views of the occaſional Neceſſity and Innocuouſneſs of withdrawing a Conſort from Connexion with mundane Exiſtence, he did not eſteem it neceſſary to make a Scandal of it, but, nevertheleſs, kindly welcomed his Siſter back to *Ferrara*, and made an amicable Arrangement concerning her with the Duke of *Urbino* on the ground of Incompatibility of Age and Diſpoſitions.

Certainly we all felt very much aggrieved for our Madama in the firſt Inſtance, and

welcomed her back as a Dove eſcaped from a Hawk; but after ſhe had been a little While among us, we began to have our private Miſgivings whether the meek Dove were ſo much her Prototype as the contentious Sparrow. Unqueſtionably ſhe lorded it a good Deal, now, over Madama *Leonora*, with "Me, a married Woman!" which, I have obſerved, always goes very much againſt the Grain with Spinſters; and, as all married Women were once Spinſters too, of Courſe they ſin with full Knowledge. Aforetime, the two Siſters had ſo much held together, that I, for one, had thought there was ſcarcely a Pin to chooſe between them. True, Madama *Leonora*'s Eyes were violet-blue, deep, ſoft, and angelic, and Madama *Lucrezia*'s were of that clear, cold, greeniſh-blue which is ſomewhat cat-like; true, Madama *Leonora*'s Hair was profuſe, ſilky, and of as lovely a colour as if dipped in *Scamander*, and Madama *Lucrezia*'s was yellower, and lank, and without any Curl in it; true, the latter always took the Lead, and the former always was content to follow it;

the one loved Admiration, and the other preferred Affection; the elder could do polite Unkindneſſes, and the younger was known for her gracious Kindneſſes—but ſtill, ſomehow, the reflected Light of one Siſter's Beauty and Goodneſs ſhed a Luſtre on the other, which no one diſcovered to be borrowed as long as their Taſtes, Habits, and Inclinations were the ſame.

Now that they had each acquired a Habitude of living apart, they were no longer inſeparable, though ſtill continually together in Public. But the Ducheſs had her own Attendants, Partizans, Correſpondents, and Favourites, to occupy the Morning Hours, which the delicate Health of Madama *Leonora* occaſioned her to paſs in comparative Secluſion.

I may have done the Ducheſs Injuſtice, but, ſhortly after her Return to *Ferrara*, I thought I perceived the diſtinguiſhing Regard with which ſhe at firſt honoured *Taſſo* gave Place to Stiffneſs, to Coolneſs, and finally to concealed Enmity. I thought I perceived that

ſhe exerciſed an injurious Influence over the Duke, which made him more and more diſtruſtful of *Taſſo*. I thought they watched him, ſet Spies upon him, and that ſhe tried not only to detect him in Evil, but betray into it, or into its Appearance. None but a Man of ſpotleſs Integrity could have walked unharmed, blindfolded, among the cunning Pit-falls now dug in his Path. As it was, he became ſo conſcious of a myſterious Web ſpun all about him, and of ſnares ſpread for him, that his Life became Miſery to him. One Evening, being at Supper with the Ducheſs, at her flattering and preſſing Invitation, he ſaw, or thought he ſaw, *Maddalo*, who was now her Cup-bearer, caſt a Pinch of whitiſh Powder into his Goblet; and exclaiming—

"Ha! Villain!"

—he ſprang up, and throttled him with his left Hand, pinning him back againſt the Tapeſtry, while he drew on him with his right. The Ducheſs ſhrieked, and, ſtarting up, overturned *Taſſo*'s Cup, whether by Chance

or otherwiſe, I know not, and then fell back, as if ſwooning, in her Chair. While her Ladies ruſhed to her Aid, her two Gentlemen collared *Taſſo*, and dragged him from the Apartment, while *Maddalo* ruſhed to relate the Outrage in his own Way to the Duke, who immediately ordered *Taſſo* to be kept under Arreſt.

I was carving for Madama *Leonora*, who was not very well, in her private Apartment, when *Olimpia*, a Girl who was her favourite Attendant, entered pale and in Tears, and related that *Taſſo*, ſeized with ſudden Madneſs, had fallen on the Ducheſs's Cup-bearer and nearly ſlain him, and was now, by the Duke's Command, under Arreſt.

I thought Madama *Leonora* would have fainted. She tried to riſe, but could not; and, after a Moment's Struggle for Breath and Voice, waved her Hand, and ſaid feebly—

"All of you go out, ſave Ser *Pantaleone* and *Olimpia*."

The other Attendants immediately withdrew. Then, with Tears in her Eyes—

"Oh, Ser *Pantaleone*," ſaid ſhe, in a Voice ſcarcely above a Whiſper, "I am ſure this is *Lucrezia*'s doing. I have no Concealments from you, my old Friend, for you are truthful and faithful to me, and ſhrewd enough to have long ſeen how Things were going. You have heard her little Hints and dark Sayings about her 'Fears that poor *Taſſo*'s Senſes were not quite as his beſt Friends would wiſh them. She did not know—ſhe feared to ſay—ſhe hoped ſhe might be miſtaken—but, indeed, there were many who thought as ſhe did of him; he had been very ſtrange at *Caſtel-durante*—and even the Duke, who had not her Safety uſually much in his Thoughts, had ſaid it might be well not to have him too much about her, as Acceſſes of Frenzy ſometimes came on when leaſt expected.' All this, you *know*, Ser *Pantaleone*, and you know, *Olimpia*, ſhe has ſaid; and now—"

Here pauſing, ſhe hid her Face in her beautiful Hands, and wept bitterly.

"My Life on 't, Madama," ſaid I, "'tis all

a Miſtake, and will be cleared up To-morrow. *Taſſo* is as ſane as I am; great Wits don't go mad—'tis unſteady Brains, not full ones, that rattle. *Maddalo*, who deſerves to be hanged like a Cat, has been caught in ſome of his evil Practices, and *Taſſo* has given him the ſummary Puniſhment he deſerved. I truſt he has not beaten the Boy within leſs than an Inch of his Life, however, for ſo far I would joyfully undertake his Correction myſelf. I'll go, however, and inquire into it on the Spot, beſeeching your Excellency to have Care for your dear Health, and to compoſe yourſelf during my Abſence."

I found *Taſſo* beyond my Reach, being ſhut into the Guard-room, guarded by one of the Ducheſs's own Attendants, in addition to two of the Duke's Guards, whom I might otherwiſe have induced to admit me. I then ſought his Highneſs, who was playing with Dice, and informed him that Madama *Leonora*, being much indiſpoſed, was greatly ſhocked to hear of *Taſſo*'s Arreſt, and begged the Thing might be inquired into, and his

Liberation granted without Delay. The Duke replied—

"It is ſimply impoſſible; but tell my good Siſter he ſhall be treated with all Lenity, and the Caſe adjudged To-morrow Morning. At Preſent I have no Leiſure for it, nor any Deſire to ſee him while the Mania is on him. I have Reaſon to think the Fit has been impending for ſome Time, and a Night's Solitude and Darkneſs will cool his Brain and purge it of ill Humours. Tell Madama *Leonora* I hope ſhe will sleep refreshingly."

A vain Hope! thought I, as I retired ill at Eaſe. In the Ante-chamber, I encountered *Antonini*, one of the Ducheſs's Gentlemen, whom I knew to have little Affection for *Taſſo;* and therefore inquired of him the Particulars of the Affray, without much Hope of hearing them impartially stated. He ſeemed little minded to ſatisfy me; ſaid he was carving a Pheaſant, and the Ducheſs was inquiring whether *Abram* the Jew Phyſician had yet returned from *Cyprus*, when ſuddenly *Taſſo* ſtarted up like a Maniac, pinned

Maddalo to the Wall, and drew upon him. He and *Guerazzi* ſeized each an Arm, and had the utmoſt Difficulty in getting him to looſen his Hold of the Boy, who was growing black in the Face; and the Ducheſs ſcreamed, "Don't let him go! Diſarm him! Remove him, but don't hurt him!" and then went off into a Swoon.

I ſaid, What offence had *Maddalo* given? He ſaid he had not heard the Boy utter a Word—it was not his Place to ſpeak at Supper, unleſs ſpoken to. He had filled for the Ducheſs, and was juſt filling *Taſſo*'s Cup, when the Fray occurred.

Here *Bertolazzi*, who had come up, muſt needs put in, that Nobody would be ſurpriſed—many had noted great Strangeneſs in *Taſſo* for ſome Time paſt, and, indeed, many Things in his Conduct were wholly indefenſible, ſave on the Suppoſition of a diſordered Mind. The Duke had noticed more than one ſtrange Vagary, and had been heard to mutter, "Crack-brained." Signor *Maffei* had aſked *Bertolazzi* who and

what the Epithet referred to; and *Bertolazzi* had ſaid—

I did not want to hear *Bertolazzi*'s Commentaries and Gloſſes, ſo moved off. Juſt outſide the Door, I met *Venieri*, the Phyſician. I ſaid,

"Doctor! they may ſwear *Taſſo* is mad, if they will—but he's no more ſo than you or I. He has had enough to make him ſo, though, long ago!"

The good Phyſician, who was much in Attendance on Madama *Leonora*, ſmiled and ſhook his Head without any other Anſwer; and then turning back, after paſſing on a few Steps, ſaid,

"Bid *Olimpia* give Madama her Henbane-draught the laſt Thing, when All is huſhed and ſtill."

CHAPTER XI

Of Taſſo *in the Guard-room.*

WHEN I lay down in Bed, I could not ſleep for thinking of my poor Friend, pacing with impetuous Steps that gloomy Guard-room looking out on the Court. As I could believe *Maddalo* bad enough for Anything, it was Nothing incredible to me that he ſhould have caſt Poiſon into *Taſſo's* Cup, provided it had been made worth his While to do ſo by ſome one ſufficiently powerful to protect him. Nay, he had Malignity enough to do it on his own Account; but would he then have dared it at the Ducheſs's Table, under her very Eye?

How was it that ſhe ſided with him rather

than with *Taſſo*, at the Moment? cauſing *Taſſo* to be diſarmed and dragged out, inſtead of having the Cup examined and the Boy arreſted? I did not like to think of it.

I fell aſleep only to dream of lighted Halls, and Banquet-tables, and beautiful Women, and Spies in Cloſets, and Bravoes in dark Doorways, and Pages drugging Goblets, ending with *Taſſo*'s wild Cry of "Ha, Villain!" which woke me up in a Panic.

Then I lay me down again and thought, with cloſed Eyes and a Smile on my Lips, that he for whom I was thus in Trouble was very likely at that Moment enjoying far better Dreams than mine had been; of fortunate Love and Fairy Enchantments and heroic Deeds ſuch as he had ſung in noble Verſe, or wide awake purſuing Themes of high Philoſophy, and calm, original Thought, ſuch as his Enemies could not deprive him of.

Thus placidly, but, alas, quite untruly repreſenting him to myſelf, I fell into a dreamleſs Sleep.

Next Morning, I repaired to the Guard-room. "*Taſſo* ſtill under Arreſt?"

"Yes, Ser *Pantaleone*."

"But how!" (chafing) "this cannot be with the Duke's Orders; he only meant him to remain for the Night. Admit me to him."

"Your Pardon, Ser *Pantaleone*. It is by the Duke's Order he is detained, and by the Duke's Order that he is to ſee None but the Court Phyſician, who is even now with him."

Juſt at this Moment, good Dr. *Venieri* came forth. I took him by the Arm, and paſſed on with him towards Madama *Leonora*'s Apartments.

"How have you found him, Doctor?"

"Diſtracted, my dear Ser *Pantaleone*, by imaginary Fears of Poiſon, Accuſations of Hereſy, the Duke's Diſpleaſure, the Ducheſs's Enmity, and I know not what all."

"*Are* they imaginary?"

"Huſh! we dare not doubt it; theſe Fancies ſpring from the black, bilious Blood

gathered upon the Heart, and fuming up to the Brain,—a lamentable Fact when we conſider his Worth and Genius."

"Ah, Doctor! do not, I implore you, adopt that Impreſſion! do not convey it to the Duke, or to any Ears but mine! It cannot, ſhall not be!—Ah, dear Doctor, don't ruin him, I beſeech you!"

"What Idea are you running away with, my dear Ser *Pantaleone?* I ſhall merely tell his Highneſs that *Taſſo* is feveriſh and excited at the Idea of having acted intemperately in the Ducheſs's preſence, and of having thereby incurred her and his Highneſs's Diſpleaſure."

"Ah, that will do! Say Nothing elſe, I beſeech you."

The good Doctor looked at me with a little Reproach, as much as to ſay, "Can't you truſt me?" then, ſignificantly tapped his Head and Heart with his Forefinger in Silence.

"You mean he has Something wrong there?"

"Not in his Heart,—he has *loſt* it."

"Ah, don't believe every Court Goſſip?"

"My dear Ser *Pantaleone*, I ſhould not hold the profeſſional Eſtimation I do, if I drew my Inferences from Court Goſſip. *Taſſo* is raving at this Minute to ſee the Girl *Olimpia*."

"*Olimpia!* he cares not for her!"

"Of Courſe not, ſave that ſhe might impart to him Tidings of her Miſtreſs. By more than one Perſon he has been ſuppoſed to court the Maid, and, between you and me, it is as well to give the foolish Fancy Currency; but we know too well it is not ſo. Farewell; I fear I ſhall not find Madama *Leonora* very well this Morning."

I parted with him full of Trouble, and *Olimpia*, preſently coming out of Madama *Leonora*'s Bed-chamber, gave me a little Billet, which ſhe deſired me to carry to the Duke. His Highneſs, who was breakfaſting, and feeding his Dogs, ran through it, and coolly told me to aſſure her Excellency, with his kindeſt Affection, that the Thing ſhe

deſired could not be done at Preſent, but that it was his Wiſh as much as hers that all ſhould go well. I ventured to aſk, of myſelf, whether Acceſs to *Taſſo* might be permitted to his Friends; but was drily anſwered, "Not at Preſent. *Coccapani* is with him."

Coccapani was the Duke's Treaſurer, a timid Man, but not unfriendly to *Taſſo*. I ſought him out, being aſſured any News I could obtain of him would make me the more welcome to Madama *Leonora*.

"I am going to him again even now," ſaid he, with obvious Diſtaſte for his Miſſion, "he has over-perſuaded me to grant him the Means of writing to the Duke, and I am about to take Charge of his Letter, though not without aſſuring his Highneſs, I promiſe you, that I have had Nothing to do with its Contents. Come with me, if you will."

So, as he invited me, I did not think it neceſſary to mention that I had already been denied Acceſs to him, but took what Fortune offered.

The Moment we entered the Guard-room,

Taſſo, who was pacing it like a caged Lion, turned about, and, ſeeing me, exclaimed,—"Ah, Ser *Pantaleone!* Ser *Pantaleone!*" and throwing himſelf on my Neck, wept. He was burning with Fever, and his Tears were like ſcalding Water.

"See!" ſaid he, raiſing his Head from my Shoulder, and looking me piteouſly in the Face, "ſee, I weep! can Madmen do that? If they wanted to make me mad, could they have deviſed a better Method than to ſhut me up here, without the Means of defending and juſtifying myſelf, while my Enemies are ranſacking my Papers, diſcovering and fabricating I know not what?"

"Huſh, my dear *Taſſo;* an innocent Man fears no Diſcoveries; and Fabrications fall to the Ground."

"How can you, how dare you ſay ſo, in the Face of all human Experience?"

"Eventually, almoſt always they do; and meantime—"

"Ah, that meantime!—"

"Muſt be borne with dignified Patience,

ſuch as I am ſure your richly ſtored Memory can ſupply you with a hundred claſſic Examples of, and ſuch as your own Heroiſm will ſurely enable you to exert. What! overcome by one Night's Solitude and Darkneſs?"

"Ah, but how buſy may my Foes have been during that ſingle Night! 'Tis *that* which racks me, Ser *Pantaleone*. Had they not already been buſy, the Duke would not thus keep me in Durance—"

"His Highneſs only detains you for your Recovery," interrupted *Coccapani*. "His Motives are moſt kind."

"Induce him then, dear *Coccapani*, in the Name of Everything that is gracious, to accelerate my Recovery, if I have indeed Aught to recover from, by permitting my immediate Return to my own Apartments, where I promiſe to keep quiet and ſubmit to whatever Meaſures he wills for my Cure. But tell him that I have never in my Life been able to endure Solitude and Confinement, and that if he keeps me here, I ſhall fall into Deſpair."

"I will, I will," *Coccapani* replied good-naturedly, "and now, farewell. Give me your Letter, and keep yourſelf quiet in the Aſſurance that your beſt Friends are caring for you."

Taſſo ſhook his Head ruefully, but wrung *Coccapani*'s Hand; and finding that I muſt depart with him, he embraced me and whiſpered, "How fares it with Madama? Oh, commend me to her with the utmoſt Devotion and Tenderneſs, and bid her be aſſured I have done no Wrong."

"She would be the laſt to think you had," returned I in the ſame Way, "I wiſh you had no worſe Enemy."

An April Gleam ſhone on his ſad Face; he ſaid, "I thank you, dear Friend, for a Word in Seaſon—" and let me go. My Heart ached when the heavy Door cloſed upon him. How joyfully would I have taken his Place! Becauſe, look you, my Mind was quiet and my Body without Diſinclination to Reſt; and I could have ſat immured there for a While quite imperturbably, knowing it

could not laſt long, and going over the laſt Month's Bills in my Head, and thinking over many pleaſant Dinners, Balls, Hunting-parties, and other Diverſions, and ſaying my Prayers, and, at the worſt, taking a Nap; whereas

I suoi Pensieri in lui dormir non ponno.

CHAPTER XII.

Of a Balcony by Moonlight.

A FEW Hours later, I had the great Satisfaction of learning that *Taſſo* had been permitted to return to his own Lodgings, on the Condition that he ſhould ſubmit himſelf to very ſtrict medical Regimen, and be conſtantly attended by the Duke's Phyſician and the Duke's Servant. Theſe Conditions I made free to attribute to the Ducheſs of *Urbino;* ſince, what Man lives in *Italy* who would not have drawn upon *Maddalo*, on the Suppoſition, whether groundleſs or not, of his having drugged his Cup?

Madama *Leonora*'s Mind was much relieved, however, by this Arrangement, as ſhe took it

for granted that *Taſſo*'s Reſtoration to Calmneſs would ſoon render the Reſtrictions now impoſed unneceſſary; and ſhe made me the Bearer of a kind Meſſage telling him ſo, and praying him to be docile and patient.

As ſoon as I ſaw him, I knew by the mild, ſteady Light of his Eye, that he was ſo already; and this kind Meſſage was of great Comfort to him. *Luigi*, one of the Duke's Pages, was in waiting, coming in and out, but he was a quiet Youth of whom Nobody was afraid, and his flitting to and fro was of little Moment to us. *Taſſo* told me in an Undertone, that he believed he had found his Bureau as he had left it.

"But why preſerve dangerous Papers in it?" ſaid I in the ſame half Whiſper.

"You are right, yet it would coſt me a ſevere Pang to deſtroy them—however, it muſt be done; but not under the Eyes of the Duke's Servants."

"Certainly not; but avail yourſelf of the firſt ſafe Opportunity."

"Yes, yes,—well, what's the News at Court?"

"Oh, this Affair of yours is ſtill the Talk."

"What ſay they of it?"

"They think you muſt have been crazy to ſpring upon *Maddalo* as you did."

"My dear Friend!" in an excited Whiſper, "I ſaw the Powder he caſt into my Cup as plainly as I ſee you!"

"Unluckily, no one elſe ſaw it, and the Contents of the Cup were ſpilled, and haſtily wiped up, ſo that no Proof remains."

"He ought to have been ſearched!"

"No Doubt of it; but when will Things be done that ought to be done?"

"What does Madama *Leonora* ſay?"

"She ſays very little, except to Dr. *Venieri*."

"Is ſhe ill?"

"You know ſhe is always ailing."

"Ah!..." he claſped his Hands on his Knee, and ſate in painful Thought a little While. "Ser *Pantaleone*, I fear me, ſhe will die, one of theſe Days."

"So ſhall we all."

"Yes; but prematurely."

"That's as God wills."

"I think it will be his Will."

"She is no longer in the Bloom of Youth, even were ſhe to be cut off to-morrow. How ſhort is even the longest Life, when we reach its End!"

"Mine appears but a Span long, when I look back upon it! How little have I done! How much remains to do!"

"I think you have done a great Deal."

"*Nothing* is done, while Anything remains incomplete. Ha! a Letter from dear *Scipio Gonzaga!*" — taking it from *Luigi*.

As he ran through it, his Look of Pleaſure became exchanged for one of Pain, Surpriſe, and Indignation.

"Read that!" ſaid he to me. "There's your true Friend for you!"—and hid his Face in his Hands.

I haſtily peruſed the Letter, which was a moſt bitter Invective. Whilſt turning in

my Mind what to ſay of it, he ſuddenly exclaimed—

"Let me ſee it again!"

And having eagerly re-examined it, "This is no authentic Letter," cried he, "but an audacious Fabrication. It wants one or two Tricks of *Scipio*'s Manuſcript which his Letters are never without. I will ſhow you."

And taking a Key from his Boſom, he unlocked the Bureau, and drew forth a Letter of *Scipio*'s, which he compared with the other, to our mutual Conviction that the Latter one was indeed a Forgery.

"To whom am I indebted for this, I wonder?" said he, ſmiling meaningly; "to ſome kind Friend, no Doubt, who, fearing Dr. *Venieri* did not find me mad, tried this Means of making me ſo."

He replaced the Letter carefully, and the other with it, ſaying, "This ſhall, if needful, be ſhown to the Duke." As he glanced over the other Contents of his Bureau, I ſaw him turn pale. I ſaid, "What is the matter?"

"Nothing," he replied evaſively; for *Luigi*

had juſt glided in. He came to announce Dr. *Venieri;* and as he entered, I retired.

What was my Chagrin to learn, the ſame Afternoon, that *Taſſo* had been examined by the Inquiſition for imputed Hereſy!

On repairing to Madama *Leonora*, who I truſted had not heard this Piece of News, I found her trembling exceedingly. She ſaid, "My Brother wants me to accompany him and *Lucrezia* to *Belriguardo*, but I cannot! I feel ſure Something terrible will happen in my Abſence."

I ſaid, "What kind of Thing, gracious Lady?"

"Oh," ſhe ſaid, claſping her Hands in Trouble, "I dare not whiſper, even to myſelf! No, no, I cannot go! Dr. *Venieri* ſhall certify that I am not well enough to leave Home at preſent."

Which Thing was done. Ah, deareſt Lady! you overreached yourſelf! The Duke and Ducheſs repaired to *Belriguardo* a few Days afterwards, leaving Madama *Leonora* behind, *and took* Taſſo *with them.*

I ſaw him two or three Times in the Interim, and noted a pale Abſtraction that had come over him. He ſeemed always trying to control a haunting Thought with ſtern Reſolve; to be living in the Abſent rather than the Preſent, and to be conſtantly purſuing two Chains of Ideas; one of which, that which occupied him moſt, never appeared above the Surface. He ſaw his Confeſſor daily, was not content with that, but continually ſat with his Head buried in his Hands, repeating the general Confeſſion to himſelf, or abſorbed in mental Prayer; he gave largely to the Poor—for ſo poor a Man, that is; ſighed frequently and deeply, and often appeared not to hear what was ſaid to him. On my aſking him, with great Concern, what ailed him, he put his Arm about my Neck, and, in a low Voice, (though no one, to the beſt of my Belief, was within ear-ſhot,) ſaid—

"I am ſpied, I am betrayed; fatal Papers have been ſeized; my Life has been attempted; it will be attempted again, and I have only to make my Peace with God."

"I truſt," ſaid I, "Nothing has been ſeized which can compromiſe an excellent Lady—"

"How ſhould there?" cried he; "unleſs, indeed, their fiendiſh Malice ſhould induce them to garble and forge, as they have not ſcrupled to do already. But oh! who is ready, who is fit to appear abruptly in the Preſence of Him who is of purer Eyes than to behold Iniquity!—fluſhed with angry Paſſion!—with the Blood, it may be, of a Fellow-ſinner on his hands! Hark! the Church-bell is ringing—Farewell, Ser *Pantaleone!*"

And he hurried away to Veſpers.

The Evening before the Duke's Departure to *Belriguardo*, he gave rather a brilliant Reception, at which Madama *Leonora* was preſent, though in the ſimple Attire of an Invalid. Neither ſhe nor *Taſſo*, who was alſo of the Company, were aware how ſoon they were to part. He was pale, thoughtful, and haraſſed, and kept much aloof from the Circle, occupying himſelf with a choice Collection of Medals on one of the Tables. To ſee whether they really engaged his Attention,

I aſked him whether one which he appeared to be intently examining were an *Antoninus* or *Severus*. He looked up at me with a bewildered Expreſſion, as if he had never heard either of the Names before. I ſaid cheerfully, "What makes you ſo abſent?"

"Abſent?" repeated he, clearing up, "no! Abſtracted, if you will! Abſence is the Characteriſtic of a vacant Mind, as Abſtraction is of a full one."

And, ſmiling, he re-examined the Medal, and gave his Opinion of it and of others, and ſpoke on general Subjects; then, when a third Perſon joined us, he went out into the Balcony.

Later in the Evening, I threw myſelf into a Chair near an open Window, and being rather Drowſy, took a little Nap. Before I cloſed my Eyes, I noticed *Taſſo* ſtill leaning over the Balcony, with his Eyes fixed on the Moon, which was brightly ſhining on the Water. The Pier between the Windows threw him into deep Shade, and he was as

immoveable as a Statue. When I next looked up, it was becauſe I was rouſed by the light Step of Madama *Leonora*, who was paſſing into the Balcony. The Heat of crowded Rooms often overcame her and made her pant for Air, and ſhe did not know that *Taſſo* was there already, for I heard a ſlight Exclamation of Surpriſe. I ſtretched out my Legs again, pretty nearly acroſs the Window, ſo that no one could paſs without ſtumbling over them, and reſumed my Nap. That is, I put myſelf in the Way of reſuming it, by cloſing my Eyes, and reclining my Head on my Cheſt, but as it would not immediately be reſumed, I did not fail to hear certain Words ſpoken in the Balcony; good Words, kind Words; true, tender, ennobling, encouraging and pure. Then Words of Sadneſs, of Sorrow. Then Words of Comfort, and Counſel. Then Words of Gratitude, of high Reſolve. Then Words of high and holy Incentive to Truſt in Heaven. Then Words and Tears of Devotion. Then Words and Tears of Sympathy and Pity. No Words or Thoughts or

Tears that a liſtening Angel might not have approved.

Accidentally he laid his Hand on hers, and withdrew it haſtily, aſking Forgiveneſs. Sweetly, benignly ſhe anſwered him, "Not for touching my Hand, but for aſking to be forgiven, do you need Forgiveneſs!"

Juſt out of the Corner of my Eye, I ſaw him give her a Look of ſuch Tenderneſs and Sadneſs!—Juſt out of the other Corner of my Eye, ſaw I *Maddalo* the Page ſtealing on them like the Serpent on *Eve* in the Garden of *Eden*. He, ſuppoſing me aſleep, was lightly ſtepping over my ſtretched out Feet, when, by raiſing one of them a little, I ſent him ſprawling, with his Head, bang! againſt the Marble. Giving him an angry Glance accompanied by a low Growl, as if juſt waking up, I had the Satisfaction of ſeeing him rub his Forehead as he ſcrambled up and retired, darting at me a Look full of Ire; while Madama *Leonora* and *Taſſo*, diſturbed by the Fall, looked round, and broke off their Conference. She returned to the Apartment, where all, buſied in their

own Amuſements, ſeemed never to have miſſed her; and *Taſſo*, having watched her retreating Figure, reſumed his Moon-gazing, and after a While, began writing on his Tablets by Moonlight.

Preſently I went out to him and began to ſpeak of the Beauty of the Night. He ſmiled, and ſaid, "You know who was with me juſt now. As a Reward for keeping off *Maddalo*, you ſhall ſee what I have written on what occurred." And he ſhowed me the pretty Lines beginning

Stava Madonna in un Balcon.

which I have always thought as pleaſing as any he has written, and which, with his Permiſſion, I made a Tranſcript of in my Pocket-book. Here they are.

My Lady in a Balcony
One Eve was standing, when that I
By Chance on her fair Hand my own Hand laid;
Pardon I begged of her, if so
I had offended her; but no.
'Not by your Hand approaching mine,' she said;
'But by its shrinking thence,
As dreading such Offence,

Could I be hurt, to see you so afraid.'
Oh blessed Words! so innocently spoken!
Of such pure Love the Token!
If they were true, might I not still be driven
The Offence still to repeat, again to be forgiven?

The next Day, after the Duke and Ducheſs had departed, with a great Equipage, to *Belriguardo*, we learnt not, till ſome Hours afterwards, that *Taſſo* had been ſummoned to attend them. He probably knew not till he reached *Belriguardo* that Madama *Leonora* remained at *Ferrara*, nor that the Attendants who formed the Duke's Cortége were without exception thoſe who were adverſe to him. Thus, Dr. *Venieri* and *Coccapani* were left behind, but Dr. *Bartolo*, the Ducheſs's Phyſician, was in Attendance; he who preſcribed Heat when *Venieri* preſcribed Cold, High-feeding when *Venieri* foreſaw Fever, and lowering Regimen when *Venieri* was for keeping the Patient up. Indeed this Phyſician was a Man ſo infinitely inferior to the other in Science, Skill, and Succeſs, that Nothing but an oily Tongue and convenient

Conſcience made him a Favourite with the Ducheſs, who rarely was indiſpoſed enough to require Aught beyond Sugar-Water or a few Slices of Lemon. The Duke, on the other Hand, who was ſubject to dangerous Attacks in his Head, would never have had the virtuous *Venieri* near him, ſave for his high Opinion of his Skill: and, on the preſent Occaſion, when Madama *Leonora* needed the good Doctor and the Duke did not,—Dr. *Bartolo* did quite as well.

What occurred during that fatal Viſit, the Actors beſt know. *Taſſo* found himſelf in the Toils, treated by the Duke with rough Harſhneſs, with threatening Looks and Words, in the Endeavour to wring from him ſome Cauſe for reaſonable Accuſation. He was bullied, baited, brow-beaten; told that Papers of his were in the Duke's Poſſeſſion, the Contents of which were ſufficient to bring him to the Rack or to Death. Then the Ducheſs endeavoured to entrap him into Confeſſion as a Friend; then the Duke inſiſted on it as a Sovereign. The end was, that the unhappy Man, refuſing to

criminate himſelf or others, was pronounced of unſound Mind by Dr. *Bartolo*, and ſent back by the Duke's Command, under Guards, to *Ferrara*, there to be confined in the Convent of San *Franciſco*, with two Friars to watch him inceſſantly.

"And becauſe," ſo ran the Duke's Orders, "he is uſed to utter Everything in Confeſſion, and to break out into a Mountain of Frenzies so that he is far worſe than ever, the Superior is to chooſe for his Keepers Perſons fit to admoniſh him of his Madneſs."

The Duke having returned to *Ferrara* a few Hours after *Taſſo*, I was ſtanding at his Elbow the next Morning, waiting while he read a few pencilled Lines Madama *Leonora* had written to him from her Bed-chamber, his Highneſs's Meaſure being at the ſame Time taking for new Buſkins by *Scarpa* the Court Shoe-maker. To him enters *Luigi*, with a Packet of Letters on a Salver, the Envelope of which he haſtily tore off, when four Letters fell to the Ground, three of which, as I picked them up, I noted to be

directed by *Taſſo*, to the two *Gonzagas*, and to the Duke himſelf. His Highneſs broke the Seals of the two firſt, peruſed the Contents and toſſed them into his Waſte-paper Baſket, then read his own, which followed the ſame Road, coolly remarking,—"There is no End to his writing of Letters." Then, while he peruſed the fourth, which was probably from the Superior of San *Franciſco*, my Eye reſted on the open Letter which lay uppermoſt in the Baſket, and I read,—

"I confeſs I may require medical Treatment for my melancholy Fancies, and I thank your Highneſs for aſſigning it to me. But in many Things I do aſſure you I am not fanciful. You believe not that I have had Perſecutors in your Service, but I have had many and bitter ones. You believe me in no Danger from the Inquiſition, but I am entangled in its Meſhes. I beſeech you by the Bowels of CHRIST to believe that I am not ſo much Mad as you deceived. I will not venture to write to the Ducheſs without your Permiſſion, but if——"

Here the fourth Letter was flung upon the others, while his Highneſs deſired *Scarpa* to give him ſufficient Space acroſs the Toes, and the next Moment bade me carry his Affection to his Siſter, and aſſure her that he would give her full Satisfaction hereafter for her Requeſt not being complied with.

I carried back my Meſſage ſadly enough, knowing the Pain it would give. Madama *Leonora* was by this Time in her Dreſſing-room, looking fluſhed and heavy-eyed; and her Hand was frequently preſſed to her Side, where ſhe now had much pain. When I repeated the Duke's Words, her Eyes filled with Tears, and ſhe ſaid,—"Cruel! he might at leaſt have juſt written. I begin to wiſh, Ser *Pantaleone*, that I were dead."

I ſaid, "I am ſorry to hear your Excellency utter a Wiſh I cannot echo. Life is, or ought to be, dear to all, and I neither can wiſh you dead, becauſe you are ill and unhappy, nor do I wiſh myſelf ſo. Trials are ſent to teſt and prove us, and they bring out the Graces of our Characters, juſt as Friction

brings out the Veins of a Piece of fine Wood. Which are the Heroes and Heroines that command your Excellency's Sympathy in Poetry and Romance? Are they thoſe who but love, to marry and be happy? On the contrary, are they not thoſe who go through much Tribulation and experience many Dangers? Likewiſe, in Hiſtory, whether ſacred or profane, the Characters we love and admire are thoſe who ſuſtained much Evil. And though all Chaſtiſement is for the preſent not joyous but grievous, yet, in the long Run, which of thoſe Perſonages, I pray you, would have wiſhed their paſt Sorrows and Trials unfelt and unconquered? No, no, they found it a Privilege to ſuffer, and would leſs willingly have parted with their Croſs than a King with his Crown."

She ſaid, ſmiling faintly, "You talk like a Sage. Go on, I like to hear you."

"Why now," I ſaid, "wherein has *Taſſo* ſhown truer Art than in enliſting our Sympathies in Behalf of *Tancred*, of *Erminia*, and even of *Armida*, by Reaſon of their

Sorrows? Nay, is not he himſelf endeared to us by the Perſecutions he ſuſtains? At this Moment, probably, his noble Genius is carrying him upwards into ſome Region of Philoſophy or Romance, enriching him with Pleaſure that the moſt proſperous of his Enemies might envy."

"It may be ſo," ſaid ſhe, reclining back on her Pillows and cloſing her Eyes, while a peaceful Smile ſtole over her Face. "Do you think, Ser *Pantaleone*, that Men of Genius, deſpite their characteriſtic Sorrows, are on the whole the moſt happy?"

"Whether the moſt happy or not," rejoined I boldly, "my Life on't, Madama, they would prefer their own Web of mixed Happineſs and Unhappineſs to the Proſperity of the verieſt Nincompoop that is petted and ſpoiled by Dame Fortune. And as touching *Taſſo*—"

Here I was checked by the unexpected entrance of the Duke, who came in as he oft loved to do, unannounced. I was ſorry the laſt word I had uttered ſhould have been the Name it was.

"You do not affect much Variety in your choice of Subjects," ſaid he, drily, after kiſſing Madama *Leonora*'s Brow.

"We were talking of the comparative Happineſs of Fools and wiſe Men," ſaid ſhe, bluſhing.

"If you placed *Taſſo* in the latter Category," ſaid the Duke, after regarding her a Moment in Silence, "you were ſomewhat deficient, it ſeems to me, in your uſual Judgment. *Taſſo* has fled."

"Fled!" cried ſhe, colouring all over, and half raiſing herſelf up.

He eyed her with the ſame quiet Scrutiny as before; and then, in his uſual impaſſive Manner added, "and has left Everything behind him — Books, Manuſcripts, *other People's Letters*—"

"They ſhould be ſealed up, Brother," cried ſhe eagerly, "ſealed with your Seal."

"Or with *yours?*" with a myſtic Smile.

"Oh no! yours would do."

"I mean it to do, I can tell you, Siſter."

"I mean, it would be beſt."

"Certainly it will be beſt. I am glad you think ſo too."

"I? Why ſhould I not?"

"You ſhould beſt know, *Leonora.*"

"If you think I ever wrote a Line to *Taſſo* I ſhould regret your ſeeing, you are quite miſtaken." Her Tone and Look were of noble Truth.

"Why write to him at all!"

"Nay, where was the Harm? I have had a hundred pleaſant Diſcuſſions with him on literary Subjects."

"For all that, Siſter, there is Something detrimental to the Character of a Woman and a Princeſs in maintaining ſuch Correſpondences. Familiarity with deſigning Perſons, beneath you in Poſition, whatever may be their native or acquired Gifts, impairs your true Dignity, tarniſhes your Mind, nay, perhaps corrupts your Heart . . . "

"Brother! ceaſe theſe cruel, theſe needleſs Words! How do they apply? and to whom? Can you call *Taſſo* deſigning? The Man you have conſidered an Honour to your

Court, have graced with your Converſation and Protection, have aſſociated with at your Table?"

"And would gladly continue to do ſo, *Leonora*, but for the Dread of his repaying all theſe Benefits by tarniſhing the Dignity of my Houſe."

"Through *me*, never!"

"Well ſaid. Do you promiſe it?"

"Certainly."

"I accept this Promiſe, my Siſter, and in Conſideration of it, overlook all the Paſt."

"What has there been to overlook?"

"Your marked Preference for one Perſon, your deſcending from your Poſition to a ſocial Equality with him, your ſecret Correspondence . . . "

"Secret! fie!—"

"Huſh, I *will* be heard! Your Permiſſion and Encouragement of Approaches that only a recognised Lover would dare to make—"

"Brother! Brother!"

"Yes, *Leonora!* cover your Face with your Hands if you will! I am glad to ſee

ſuch a Signal of penetrative Shame. No Anſwer, no Defence, I inſiſt on't!—Madam! I chooſe to be heard, to be obeyed! *Taſſo* has fled, but will be recalled. To you he muſt henceforth be as a Stranger. On that, his Fate, his Liberty depends. Before the Year's End, I truſt to ſee you a happy Wife. That is a Circumſtance with which a Man moving in a different Sphere *can* have Nothing to do.

"Let her have Air and Water, Ser *Pantaleone*."

CHAPTER XIII.

Of Ser Pantaleone's *Conference with the Duke of* Ferrara.

WITH *Taſſo*'s Flight to *Naples* and Stay with his Siſter, I have no Concern. He remained with her about a Year; happy if he had never left her! But he was not allowed to reſt; nor, peradventure, had he Reſt in himſelf. If we make not ourſelves happy in what ought to make us happy, Nobody elſe can make us ſo.

During this Time, Madama *Leonora*'s Health declined viſibly. I had my own Theory about it, which had no Reference to *Taſſo*, and I proved to be right.

Meanwhile, two or three advantageous Offers of Marriage were preſſed on her by the Duke, who was himſelf thinking of

Matrimony for the third Time in his Life: but by her were they uniformly rejected.

One Day, I was ſummoned to the Duke's Bed-chamber. He was in Bed, not from Illneſs but Lazineſs, ſitting half up, with his Breakfaſt and Letters all about him in Confuſion. *Luigi*, who was in Attendance, was diſmiſſed; and the Duke then ſigned to me to ſit down beſide him.

"The Marquis ſtill preſſes his Suit," ſaid he abruptly, "does Madama *Leonora* ſhow any Sign of Change of Purpoſe?"

"None, your Highneſs."

"This Obſtinacy can proceed but from one Cauſe. Ser *Pantaleone*, you have formerly carried Letters from her to *Taſſo*."

"Never but twice, your Highneſs."

"Tut! twice or twenty Times is all the ſame."

"There was no Secreſy enjoined, your Highneſs."

"Well,—we'll drop that. Does ſhe correſpond with him now?"

"No, my Lord."

"Do you ſpeak poſitively?"

"I mean, as far as I know, ſhe does not."

"Do you think you ſhould certainly know if ſhe did?"

"My Lord, I can't ſay—However, I think,—yes, I think I ſhould."

"If you find ſhe does, let me know."

"Very well, my Lord."

"And bring her Letters to me."

"My Lord Duke—"

"Proceed, Ser *Pantaleone*."

"You think her Excellency refuſes Marriage on account of *Taſſo*. . . "

"What Matter is it of yours, Sir, what I think?"

"True, your Highneſs."

"However,—I *do* think ſo, Ser *Pantaleone*."

"Good. And that her Excellency's Ill-health is cauſed by her fretting for him?"

"Hum—I do."

"I have quite another Theory for it, your Highneſs."

"Let us hear it."

"I believe ſhe has a mortal Complaint."

"Ha!"

"I believe ſome vague Preſentiment of this, or, at any Rate, the indeſcribable Languiſhing which accompanies it, (I had a Siſter who died ſo,) cauſes her Repugnance to the Offers you preſs on her; and that *Taſſo* has Nothing whatever to do with it."

"Ha! How long have you thought this?"

"It occurred to me a Year ago; but I have been perſuaded of it the laſt two Months."

"How is it Dr. *Venieri* has ſaid Nothing of this?"

"I believe he is watching her, but is anxious not to alarm her."

"Hum—poor *Leonora!*—I am ſorry for this. I hope Nothing has accelerated it."

"No, my Lord, Nothing could accelerate or retard it materially, though I believe Sorrow of Heart aggravates the Symptoms. It did in the Caſe of *Viola*. If it be as I think, Nothing can ſave her."

"*If it be as you think!* I cannot take your Opinion of it—I muſt hear Dr. *Venieri*."

"So beſt, your Highneſs."

"You had a Sister, you say—How long do you suppose Madama *Leonora* has to live?"

"Ah, your Highness, I cannot prognosticate within a Year or six Months."

"A Year is not long—we must make it easy to her."

"Then, if I might presume, I would say, do not let Dr. *Venieri* alarm her by his Measures."

"Certainly not. Hum! Then if it be as you say, *Tasso* could do no Harm here."

"Neither Harm nor Good, that I know of."

"Nay, a Man of his Reputation always lends Lustre to a Court. And the House of *Este* has always been noted for its fostering Patronage of Genius. Therefore,—yes,—you may tell Madama *Leonora* he will be recalled."

"Very well, my Lord."

"Or, stay,—it is hardly consistent with our Dignity to do so otherwise than indirectly. You may tell her from me that she has Permission to recall him."

"Yes, my Lord."

" That is all. Bid *Luigi* come to me now, about the Hawk's Jeſſes. And, hark you! ſend me Dr. *Venieri*."

I bowed, and withdrew; ſcarcely noting Something trundling before me from under my Chair to the neareſt Curtain. However, it was the Ducheſs *Lucrezia*'s ugly Hedge-hog of a Dwarf.

I fulfilled my Miſſion with mixed Feelings. I expected it to give Pleaſure to my dear Miſtreſs, whom I now loved with the Tenderneſs of a Father (not that I was quite old enough for that, neither!) and I doubted the Expediency of recalling *Taſſo* from a Home where he was now happy. However, that was none of my Buſineſs. I delivered my Meſſage, and thought, from the impaſſive Manner in which it was received, that it gave little Pleaſure; but, in the Courſe of the Afternoon, Madama *Leonora* cleared up ſo ſurpriſingly, that it was plain to me ſhe had only concealed her Gratification out of modeſt Shyneſs; and Dr. *Venieri*, who came to ſee her, was agreeably ſurpriſed at her having ſo

brightened. As he came forth, I advanced from the Window of the Ante-chamber, where I was ſkimming over a Pamphlet, and said,

"Is ſhe better, Doctor?"

"Surpriſingly ſo," he anſwered.

"Will the Improvement be permanent, think you?"

He ſighed, and ſhook his head. It was quite enough for me.

However, the Improvement laſted for ſeveral Days, with trivial Intermiſſions; even till her Excellency received *Taſſo*'s Anſwer to the Letter ſhe had written him without Delay. It ſeemed to diſappoint her a good Deal: ſhe wrote again; and her Health again drooped. His ſecond Reply produced freſh Perturbation; ſhe did not write again for ſome Time, and evidently fretted upon it. The Duke ſent for me. "Has *Taſſo* anſwered Madama *Leonora*'s Letter?—her *ſecond* Letter?"

"He has, your Highneſs."

"Is he coming?"

"I underſtand he has excuſed himſelf, your Highneſs."

"Inſolence! The Invitation will not be repeated."

"I rather think her Excellency has written yet a third Time, your Highneſs."

"I am ſorry to hear it. She has lowered herſelf by ſo doing. If he return to *Ferrara* in conſequence, his Reception will be ſuch as he deſerves."

"Alas, my Lord! his Excuſe is that of Ill-health."

"Pſha! Ill-health is a falſe Plea both with him and Madama *Leonora*. They uſe it when it ſerves their Purpoſes. She cleared up, directly ſhe had Licence to recall him."

"How ſoon to droop again, my Lord!"

"She has been out."

"Twice to Church, and once along the Terrace on her white Mule. At Church ſhe fainted; I carried her out."

"Becauſe ſhe was vexed at *Taſſo*'s Contumacy."

"If your Highneſs will aſk Dr. *Venieri*—"

"Dr. *Venieri* is growing old and ſtupid. I mean her to ſee Dr. *Bartolo*. The Ducheſs

is certain he will underſtand her Caſe much better."

I bowed, and retired; perſuaded in my own Mind that Madama *Leonora* would not ſee him. She did, however; but refuſed to give up Dr. *Venieri*'s Treatment for his. So Dr. *Bartolo*, much affronted, carried his own Report of her to the Duke and Ducheſs, and ſaw her no more, ſave as a formal Viſitor, in which Character he perſiſted in waiting on her, though ſhe was another Man's Patient.

Taſſo's third Letter was accompanied by one from his Siſter to Madama *Leonora*, imploring her, in the moſt moving Terms, to deſiſt from tempting him back to a Place that had been fatal to his Peace; beſeeching her to compaſſionate the Feelings of a widowed Siſter, whoſe only Solace was nurſing him into Health; and praying, that after having been ſeparated from him ſo many Years, ſhe might at leaſt retain him with her till quite reſtored to his former Self.

When Madama *Leonora* read this Letter, ſhe wept. After giving it to me to read, ſhe

wrote a few Lines to *Taſſo*, releaſing him from any Obligation to return to *Ferrara*, and promiſing to abſtain from urging what ſhe now plainly ſaw was injurious as well as diſtaſteful to him.

This lured back the eſcaped Bird. It is impoſſible to tell whether ſhe expected and meant it to have that Effect. For, note you, Lovers often act by the Rule of Contrary, and bid one another forget them when they deſire Nothing ſo much as to be remembered all the more. *Taſſo*'s Anſwer was ſhort, and impetuous enough, I warrant you; he would, he muſt return to a voluntary Prison! Perhaps he meant that, too, to be taken by the Rule of Contrary. If he did, I can only ſay that it proved too true.

At a brilliant Reception given by the Duke in Honour of the Auſtrian Ambaſſador, I ſaw, unexpectedly, one whoſe Look and Mien marked him out among a Thouſand, in his ſimple black Suit, among Velvet Mantles, waving Plumes, and golden Chains. His Eye was wandering anxiouſly round, as if in Queſt

of ſome one he did not ſee. I hurried up to him. "*You* here? Have you ſeen the Duke?"

"Not yet."

"Did he invite you?"

"Surely, as of old, I have the Privilege of the Houſehold."

"But—did he invite you to *Ferrara?*"

"Certainly — on Conditions. Where is Madama *Leonora?*"

"Alas, ſhe is very ill."

"*Dying?*"—with a ſudden Thrill.

"Huſh! we dare not ſay ſo."

"You ſuſpect it! Does ſhe know her Danger?"

"Apparently not."

"Ah!—" He claſped his Hands, and pauſed.

"But, my deareſt *Taſſo*, was it quite ſafe to come among us?"

"I thought it more noble to put my Life into the Duke's Hands than to deny Madama *Leonora*'s wiſhes."

"Be on your Guard, however."

"I *muſt*. But you know his Highneſs has my Poem and all my Papers in his Poſſeſſion. I have written repeatedly for them in vain. If any Evil befal my Poem, it will drive me frantic —juſt what they want!"—ſmiling ſadly.

"I believe *Coccapani* has it in Charge."

"Yes, but he won't give it up without the Duke's Orders. See, the Crowd opens—I may go and make my Bow to him."

I ſtood watching him, and beheld in Dumbſhow a very cool, almoſt mortifying Reception. His Highneſs looked full at him, but ſcarcely inclined his Head, and turning about, addreſſed himſelf to another Perſon. The Crowd cloſed in between us, and I ſaw no more.

About an Hour after, he came up to me in great Agitation. "Did you ſee the Duke?" ſaid he hurriedly; "he all but turned his Back upon me, and the Courtiers have taken their Cue from him, and treated me with abſolute Indignity. I cannot ſtay. I ſpoke a Word to *Coccapani*, who denied he had my Poem or any other of my Papers, and referred

me to Count *Scipio.* I ſpoke to the Count, and he replied with abſolute Contempt. This, in the Duke's Preſence, cannot be reſented; but I muſt either ſpeak to his Highneſs or write to him in the Morning; and if this goes on, I—I fear the Conſequences to myſelf!"

And preſſing his Hand to his Brow with a Look of extreme Anguiſh, he left the Apartment.

On my relating his Return to Madama *Leonora*, who had gone to Bed early, and did not riſe till very late the next Morning, ſhe was full of Grief to learn of his cool Reception, and would have written a few Lines inſtantly to the Duke, but that Dr. *Venieri*, who entered juſt as ſhe was attempting it, ſtrongly urged her deſiſting, and keeping herſelf quiet. The Entrance of the Ducheſs *Lucrezia*, who now took a very high Tone in the Sick-room, ſettled the Matter without another Word; for Madama *Leonora*, knowing how uſeleſs it would be, cloſed her Deſk with a Sigh, and gave it to *Olimpia* to carry away. The Ducheſs, when ſhe left her Siſter, gave

Orders, on her own Authority, to the Attendants in the Ante-chamber, to keep her perfectly quiet, and admit no one to her, however urgent the Buſineſs, as it was of the firſt Importance to her Health that ſhe ſhould have ſome undiſturbed Repoſe. Her Highneſs had, indeed, prevailed on her Siſter to take, though reluctantly, a Confection prepared for her by Dr. *Bartolo*, which produced Drowſineſs, Sleep, and finally a wakeful Stupor accompanied by Nauſea. While this was in operation, it was, indeed, highly expedient that ſhe ſhould be kept perfectly quiet; and I regretted not, on her Account, that *Taſſo*, among others, was denied Admiſſion to her; but that was no good Reaſon why the Ducheſs's Doors ſhould likewiſe be cloſed againſt him, or that the Duke ſhould deny him Permiſſion to open his Lips in his Preſence, which I afterwards learnt to be the Caſe. *Taſſo*, adhering to the Letter of the above Prohibition, ſtood in his Highneſs's Path with Hands claſped and ſtretched towards him in the Guiſe of Entreaty; which was conſidered ſo contuma-

cious an Act that an Attendant was ſent to bid him roughly, (juſt as you might chaſe a ſtray Greyhound from your Gate,) to deſiſt from Applications to the Duke altogether, whether by Letter, Speech, or Poſture; and to ſubmit himſelf with Docility to the Directions of Dr. *Bartolo*, who would purge his noxious Humours out of him. It is not very ſurpriſing that, on ſuch Treatment as this, the unhappy Man ſhould again leave *Ferrara;* ſcarcely knowing whither to flee from the Foes that purſued him as the Furies did *Oreſtes*.

During the few Days before his Flight, I, being in cloſe Attendance on Madama *Leonora*, ſaw and heard Nothing of him. It was from the Ducheſs's Communication of the Fact to her Siſter, that I firſt learnt it. As his Turmoil of Soul was exaggerated, ſo were his Offences expatiated upon, and the bare Circumſtance of his Flight mentioned without any of the Aggravations that had induced it; no Wonder, therefore, that his Conduct appeared unreaſonable and haſty, even to us

who loved him beſt; while the Ducheſs *Lucrezia* dwelt on it as the Proof of actual Phreneſis, and inveighed againſt his Ingratitude to the Duke, who would kindly have put him under the beſt medical Treatment.

I believe that many ſalt Tears were ſhed for him by my ſweet Miſtreſs. She would have me ſit beſide her Couch in an eaſy Chair, (for the great Toe of my left Foot manifeſted arthritic Symptoms at that Period,) and lament to me what a grievous Thing Madneſs was, whether Hypochondria, Mania, or by whatever other Name the wiſe Ones would call it; how inſcrutable an Infliction of Providence on Some that were good and great and wiſe above their Fellows. She wondered where he had gone; whether he had any Money, any Friends, and wiſhed I could obtain Tidings of him. This I at length did, in the following Billet from him at *Mantua*.

"The Doors were ſhut againſt me, with every Mark of Inſolence, even by the Grooms and Porters of the Palace. I was expected to

conſent to be a third with *Solon* and *Brutus;* that is, to feign or lie under the Imputation of Madneſs. Sooner than that, I abandoned my Home, my Poem, my Love; and, after thirteen Years of Service, departed, as a new *Bias*, on Foot and alone, to ſeek with ſome other Prince a ſecure Aſylum. I have come to my Father's Friend, the Duke of *Mantua*, but he will neither hear nor ſee me, and no Wonder, for I learn that the Duke of *Ferrara* is making Suit for Madama *Margherita.* Having fled without Money, I have been obliged to part with the Ruby I had from the Ducheſs, and the gold Collar given me by the Duke of *Urbino* when I was their Gueſt at *Caſtelduranté.* I have an Emerald from another and dearer Hand, from which I will never part! I go hence To-morrow; whither, I know not. Commend me to your and my loved Miſtreſs. *Sta ſano ed amami.*

"P.S. I hope his Highneſs won't burn my Poem?"

"Burn his Poem!" repeated Madama

Leonora, as ſhe read the Letter, "Is it not enough of itſelf, Ser *Pantaleone*, to drive him out of his Mind, to think that ſuch a Calamity may happen?"—

"Madama," in an under-tone, "her Highneſs is coming in."

"Ah!" and with a little Smile at me, half ſad, half imploring, ſhe dropped her Handkerchief over the Billet, which I never aſked her for afterwards, nor did ſhe ever reſtore it unaſked.

The Ducheſs *Lucrezia*, then ſweeping in, accoſted my dear Miſtreſs with, "How fares it with you, Siſter?"

"Siſter, I am perturbed at what I have juſt learnt. *Taſſo* is at *Mantua*, and in Diſtreſs. Ah, if you love me, ſend after him! Induce *Alfonſo* to recall him!"

"*Leonora!* how often muſt I tell you that you never will get well while you continue to diſturb yourſelf in this Way about a worthleſs Man? Your Illneſs has no other Foundation, and it is not very creditable to you. Your ſtupid, time-ſerving old Dr. *Venieri* may be

blinded by your ſaying you have this and that Malady, and play into your Hands, but *we* know very well that your Symptoms are neither more nor leſs than factitious and ſimulated, and that if you ceaſed to moleſt yourſelf to Death about *Taſſo*, you would become perfectly well."

"Oh, ceaſe, *Lucrezia*, ceaſe! You know not the Anguiſh you are giving me! Anything elſe I can ſuffer; but this—"

And ſhe covered her pale, quivering Features.

"Your Highneſs will excuſe me," ſaid I bluntly to the Ducheſs, "but Dr. *Bartolo* as well as Dr. *Venieri*, preſcribed the Abſence of all exciting Emotions, and we know very well that this Subject naturally excites her Excellency. *I* was to blame, I only, for dropping, like a Fool as I was, a Hint of what I took to be ſimply the common News, which I am always the laſt to hear."

"Certainly it is no News to me," ſaid the Ducheſs, "for the Duke no ſooner heard it than he bade *Clementillo* ride Poſt to *Mantua* for the Purpoſe of recalling *Taſſo*."

"Did he? that was very kind," ſaid Madama *Leonora*, wiping away her Tears.

"Certainly it was very kind, *Leonora*, though I wonder you admit it to be ſo! Very kind, and very gracious, and very condeſcending, but entirely thrown away on an Ingrate and a Madman. *Taſſo* had left *Mantua* and proceeded to *Urbino*, whether to report the lateſt Intelligence of me to my lord Duke or not, I cannot ſay. However, the Duke had the Grace not to receive him, which is more than I ſhould have expected, conſidering the Way they uſed to go on together at *Caſtel-durante*—bandying Flatteries and Proteſtations of Friendſhip till I was quite nauſeated with them, I can tell you!"

"And is he there now?"

"No, he ſpent a few Days with the Duke's Secretary,—juſt long enough to write an Elegy or Eulogy, whichever you prefer hearing it called, on the Secretary's Wife, whom every one is juſt now crying up to the Skies, merely becauſe ſhe has happened to die young—at the Age of twenty-ſix, that is,—

not ſo very young, neither. . . You and I have had enough of ſuch Effuſions tagged to our Names to know their real Worth,—though I believe *you* care for them even now."

"And where is he?"

"Ah, we muſt always be reverting to the old Theme, then! You know as much as I do. He has ſtrayed away from *Peſaro*, ſomewhere in the Direction of *Savoy*—no one knows what has become of him. I ſhall not be ſurpriſed any Day, to hear he has laid violent Hands on himſelf. Madmen often do."

After this kind Obſervation, the Ducheſs ſat quiet a little, and then ſaid, "It is Time to go to Church, I believe. Adieu, dear *Leonora*. I thought you would like to hear all the News I had collected of your Favourite before I went, and came on Purpoſe. There will be a Water-party after Church, and a grand Reception in the Evening, ſo I will not diſturb you again, dear, unleſs you would like to ſee me dreſſed. I will remember you in my Prayers."

And, lightly kiſſing her Siſter's Forehead, ſhe withdrew; turning back at the Door, to aſk if ſhe ſhould ſend her Dwarf for her Amuſement, which Madama *Leonora* declined with Thanks.

I never can think how Women can bear ſuch human Monſtroſities about them, myſelf. Fitter far, in my Opinion, to create a Shudder, and to be recoiled from by their tender Natures, than to be made alternately their Butts and Pets—either being the Signs of a cruel or a weak Mind. Perhaps, in the firſt Caſe, the Tenderneſs that reigns in a true Woman's Heart was called forth by ſome Inſtance of Oppreſſion exerciſed towards one of theſe revolting little Unfortunates, and ſo in her Pity ſhe careſſed and humoured him till ſhe became really fond of the Object of her Humanity, and found Amuſement in his groteſque Ways of ſhowing his Gratitude; and ſo they came to be in Faſhion. But in the Main they are not grateful, nor even good-tempered. Their Affliction cuts them off from Fellow-feeling with their Kind, on

whom they love to wreak their petty Malice for poſſeſſing Advantages themſelves are denied; and they ſeek Compenſation for their Infirmities in Gluttony, Humourſomeneſs, Caprice, Miſchief, and Malice. This Beaſt of a Dwarf —for I really may call him ſuch—belonging to the Ducheſs of *Urbino*, was as gluttoniſh as a Pig, as ugly as a Toad, as miſchievous as a Monkey, as ſly as a Fox, as long-eared as an Aſs, but a good deal ſharper witted, for what his long Ears received, his long Head retained, and his long Tongue imparted to his Miſtreſs; but to Others he was as cloſe as a Marmot. For the Reſt, he was always under Somebody's Chair, or beneath the Table, or in ſome Corner where one would leaſt expect him; and, as I have ſaid before, he could trundle along the Floor like a Hoop.

CHAPTER XIV.

Of the Duke's third Wedding.

WITH the opening Year, we celebrated his Highneſs's Marriage with Madama *Margherita*, with all the Pomp and outward Feſtivity that it is poſſible to conceive; but to me there ſeemed to be little Hilarity in it. I was growing in Years, or at leaſt not ſo young as I had formerly been, and was beginning to be ſick of Hunting and Hawking, Water-parties and Tourneys, Concerts and Play-acting; all the more ſo becauſe the beſt and deareſt and faireſt of the Houſe of *Eſte* was drooping like a Lily of the Valley that the Noonday Sun has burnt up.

One Day, having left her with her Women in a fainting State, I entered my own Apart-

ment, which was now in the Palace, and ſhut the Door upon myſelf, uttering a deep Sigh. The Sigh was echoed by another as deep; and, ſtarting, I looked round, and ſaw a Man in a black Cloak, raiſing his Eyes, which were red with weeping, from his folded Arms, on which his Head had been reſting. I mutely held out my Arms to him; it was *Taſſo*.

"You weep!" cried he, looking eagerly into my Face. "Kind Friend! bleſſed Sympathy!"

"Pſha!—a Moment's Weakneſs—I never gave way ſo before. I have been a little upſet this Morning, and did not expect to ſee you. Dear *Taſſo!* my long-loved Friend!"

"Oh, dear old Friend, theſe Tears honour you! they are Balm to my Heart. But why, why have Madama *Leonora*'s Doors been cloſed againſt me ever ſince I returned to *Ferrara?*"

"You amaze me! Have you been long here? I concluded you had but juſt arrived!"

"I have been here theſe five Days, driven from Court and Lobby, denied Admittance to

the Duke and Princeſſes, treated by my old Acquaintance with cold Neglect, or abſolute Cruelty. I begin to fear my Head will not ſtand this much longer. I am as ſane as you are, but I feel Something working *here*—"

And he clasped his Head with his two Hands, and ſtood looking at me, the Picture of Woe.

"My deareſt *Taſſo*, ſit down—I have offered you no Refreſhment." And I took a Bottle of Lacryma and two *Venice* Glaſſes from the Cupboard.

"*Cibabis nos Pane lacrymarum?*" ſaid he, quick as Thought; "*et Potum dabis nobis in Lacrymis in Mensura?*"

"If this Wine be poiſoned," ſaid I ſmiling, "the Glaſſes will crack."

"There are many Ways of murdering a Man beſides drugging his Cup," ſaid he, after pledging me. "Have you never heard of Pouncet-boxes that ſhould ſlay thoſe who ſmelt at them—gold Collars that ſhould contract round the Neck and produce Strangulation — envenomed Gloves — Air-piſtols —

Down-pillows from which leapt a Knife to pierce the Cheek that ſought Repoſe on them? How met the firſt Ducheſs of *Ferrara* her Death, I pray you?"

"They ſaid—Dr. *Bartolo* ſaid—ſhe had a putrid Fever."

"You *know*, however, it was not ſo. The Thing will go down in Hiſtory! What killed the Archducheſs *Barbara?*"

"Nay, conſider her Connexions! *There*, at leaſt, was no foul Play, poor Thing!"

"It may have been ſo; yet I have ſeen Jewel-caſes and Bracelet-clasps contrived as Vehicles for ſubtle Poiſons. They *ſell* them, Sir, in *Venice!* What became of *Ercole Contrario*, in this very Palace? He entered, and never went forth!"

"Too true, my dear *Taſſo*, but you muſt not conjure up theſe Phantoms of Evil. Neither you nor I can foreſee what ſore Teſts it may pleaſe the Almighty to put us to before we die, or in Death—and, let us remember, Nothing can happen without his Knowledge and Permiſſion;—but ſhall we,

then, embitter every previous Hour by conſidering all the Caſualties which may befal us? That would be neither wiſe nor brave. We ſhould 'die daily,' in a different Senſe from the Apoſtle. You ſpoke juſt now of Madama *Leonora*'s Doors being cloſed againſt you. This has not been with her Knowledge, or with mine; on the contrary, her Heart is full of Kindneſs and Sympathy for you, but you are perhaps unaware that ſhe is declining under the ſad Influence of a ſlow but mortal Malady—"

"Poiſon!"—

"No, no, not Poiſon; a direct Diſpenſation from Heaven; more painful even in its Progreſs, perhaps, than the fearful Inſtruments of Deſtruction you have been ſpeaking of."

"Ah! God be her Aid!"

And he clasped his Hands over his Eyes, which overflowed with trickling Tears.

"Still, it is better to fall into the Hands of God than of Man," ſaid he, cheering up. "Shall I, then, never ſee her more? I have only ſtolen up into your Chamber when the

Porters happened to be off Duty, and may never have ſuch an Opportunity again."

"*Taſſo!* if I gave you an Opportunity would you abuſe it?"

"As I am a living Man, no!"

"Do you think you could command yourſelf?"

"I am certain."

He raiſed his noble Figure to its full Height, cleared his Brow, and ſtood looking full at me in calm, ſerene, Self-control. Ah! what a Man he was!

"Well,—I am going to do a very bold Thing,—and perhaps may fail after all. The Duke, the two Ducheſſes and their Train are from Home,—or you had not found the Entrance ſo negligently guarded—Madama *Leonora* is only with her Women, and has been very much indiſpoſed all the Morning, but I think an Interview with you would cheer her, if you would ſedulouſly avoid whatever could excite, and only aim at ſpending a calm and cheerful Hour with her."

"I will meet her as if we had parted but

Yeſterday! It ſhall be like one of our old Chats at *Coſandoli*."

"Exactly! That will be the very Thing. I may depend on you?"

"Rely on me, my dear old Friend!" He wrung my Hand, and then, claſping both his own, looked up to Heaven with Thoughtfulneſs and high Reſolve.

"Wait a Moment, then. I will ſee if the Thing can be done."

I left him, and in a few Minutes returned.

"Follow me. And remember your Promiſe."

CHAPTER XV.

Of the Interview in Madama Leonora's *Dreſſing-room.*

THE mild Light of a ſunny Winter Morning was ſo tempered by Sun-blinds and Moſquito-curtains of pale roſe-coloured Gauze, that the waxen Features of my dear Madama appeared leſs wan and faded than they would have done in a full Light; and her graceful, waſted Form, draped in the ſofteſt Muſlin, with a long Veil of fine black Lace falling from her Head over her Shoulders in full Folds, betrayed little of its Emaciation except to the Eyes that daily watched her and the Arms that daily lifted her. A Roſary of Pearls with ruby Credo-beads, and an Agnus-Dei of exquiſitely carved Ivory, was her only Ornament; an ebony

Crucifix and illuminated Miſſal were on the little Table beſide her, together with a perforated Ball of ſilver Filagree-work filled with Eſſence, and a Vaſe of Venetian Glaſs filled with Hyacinths, Narciſſuſes, Violets, and Snowdrops, which perfumed the Air. At her Head ſtood *Olimpia*, ſedulouſly arranging the Pillows of her Couch, which when ſhe had done, ſhe ſat down on a high Stool juſt apart from her, gently fanning her now and then with a Feather-fan.

Taſſo, advancing quickly yet gently towards her, knelt beſide her, kiſſed the thin Hand ſhe extended to him, and ſaid cheerfully, "The Bleſſing of God be upon you, dear Lady!"

She betrayed more Emotion than he did, and lay quite ſilent, with quivering Lip and fluttering Boſom. Pointing to a low Stool, on which he could ſit facing her and cloſe to her, ſhe ſaid in a Whiſper, "Sit there."

He did ſo, and immediately took her Hand again in his, and continued regarding her fixedly, with a ſweet and affectionate Smile.

The Effort to him muſt have been immenſe, but there was no Sign of there being any Effort at all.

Almoſt voiceleſſly, ſhe at length ſaid, "You find me much altered. And you are altered too."

"Have not I had Enough to alter me?" ſaid he cheerfully. "If you think me altered, after eighteen Months' abſence, what muſt my Siſter *Cornelia* have done, when we met for the firſt Time ſince our Childhood? She did not know me at all! I gueſſed it would be ſo, and played her ſuch a Trick! Oh, such a Trick!"

"Tell me about it, *Taſſo!*"

"So I will, but where ſhall I begin? Oh, from the Night I ran away from you all, when you had ſpoken thoſe kind, ſweet, inſpiriting Words to me *in the Balcony*." (He had not left *Ferrara* that Night, but it was the laſt Time ſhe had ſeen him.) "Ah well, that was a ſorrowful Time with me; I will not much dwell upon it. I longed for my early Home, for my native Country, for

my Sister's sweet Voice and loving Eyes—you know, Madama, how I have always clung to the Sympathy of Women——"

Madama *Leonora* here mutely held towards him a little Medallion of the Blessed Virgin. He smiled, bowed reverently towards it, crossed himself, and went on.

"Having started almost without Money, I made my Way as I could, chiefly on Foot, sometimes sleeping in the Casali of lone Vineyards, sometimes in Shrines and Hermitages, at the Foot of a Cross, or in the Hollow of a Tree. The Contadini let me share their Polenta and Maccaroni, and now and then gave me delicious Grapes and Figs, or a Draught of Goat's Milk and a Lump of black Bread."

"Ah, poor *Tasso!*"

"Not poor at all, dearest Madama, I liked it very much, and rewarded them with Stories of Enchantment. When I got to *Rome*, I found Friends, who supplied my Needs, and would fain have had me tarry with them. However, I must needs push on, to see my

dear *Cornelia.* Between *Rome* and *Terracina,* the Banditti were committing terrible Ravages, the whole Country rang at Night with hoarſe Cries of Men, and Screams of poor, fearful Women. I longed to have a Cut at them. Suddenly I found myſelf ſurrounded, ſeized, and carried off to the Brigands' Strong-hold. I was ſearched, and the Little I had was taken from me. They came to my Pocket *Virgil,* wherein my Name was written. The Captain of the Band, a ſwarthy, ſtalwart Fellow, with a Picture of the Bleſſed Virgin round his Neck, was the only one who could read. 'What! *Taſſo?*' cries he, 'the Man whom *Italy* delights to honour?' (funny *Honour,* Madama!) 'Come, tell us a Story, and you ſhall have back your Money, and ſup with us into the Bargain!' What could I do? I ſpun the Rogues a mingled Web of Romance, Poetry, and Hiſtory, daſhing in a Moral here and there,—a Moral of the rough, manly ſort, about Valour, Conſtancy, and Compaſſion towards Women,—and ſo we ſate round the Watch-fire till Midnight, and

the next Morning they ſped me on my Way. The Captain being deſirous of beſtowing on me ſome Mark of his Friendlineſs and Munificence, I begged of him a rough Goatherd's Suit of Sheepſkins, with Leggings and flapped Hat complete, which he willingly beſtowed on me. Then, with my own Clothes in a Bundle at the End of a rough Staff I carried over my Shoulder, I trudged away towards *Sorrento*, a very Picaroon in Appearance, I aſſure you, Madama!"

"How I ſhould have loved to ſee you! Go on, dear *Taſſo*."

"Arrived at *Sorrento*, I ſought out *Cornelia*'s Houſe, which overlooked the Bay, and was of modeſt but agreeable Exterior, betokening Affluence, though hardly Opulence. I ſought and obtained Admittance, on the Pretext of having a Letter, which I muſt entruſt only to her own Hands. I was uſhered into a pleaſant Summer-chamber, perfumed with Orange-bloſſoms, and having a Balcony overlooking the Bay. Here ſate *Cornelia*, rocking the Cradle of her youngeſt Infant; ſhe was more

like my dear Mother in her Prime than like the little Girl who had laſt kiſſed me at the Gate, when Don *Angeluzzo* carried me to *Rome*—a young and beautiful Matron, Madama.

"Well, ſhe looked at me ſtrangely,—I blundered out a few Words in a feigned Voice, and took from my Boſom a Letter I had written her in the Brigands' Cave, myſteriouſly deſcribing myſelf in Danger and as a Fugitive. She recogniſed my Hand at once, tore open and haſtily peruſed the Billet; and, I confeſs to you, I experienced ſweet Emotions on ſeeing her bedew it plentifully with Tears."

"*Taſſo!* I think all Men like giving Women Pain! Fie on you! How *could* you?"

"Well, ſhe examined and croſs-examined me. I led her a fine Dance, Madama! and juſt as ſhe was ready to wring her Hands and burſt into Tears, giving me up for loſt, off flew my Cap and ſhaggy Coat,—her Brother ſtood confeſt! There were we, laughing, crying, kiſſing!—Ah, Madama!"

"Well! And then? and then?"

"Well, and then, and then——*She* ſcolded, I laughed, ſhe upbraided, I grew penitent, ſhe queſtioned, I made Anſwer, gave her a long Catalogue of Woes, ſet her crying, kiſſed away her Tears, aſked for her eldeſt Boys, was told they would preſently return from School, and ſo we agreed to eat, drink, and be merry together, and read, and talk, and laugh, and make Verſes, and look at the Sea, and be as happy as the Day is long, while Fate would let us. And ſo we went on, for nearly a Year, till you, *you* tempted me away.—Ah, Madama!"

"*Taſſo*, I never knew till now how wrong it was! Oh, forgive me!"

"Wrong! Ah, Madama!"

He kiſſed her Hand, and ſmiled; ſhe ſmiled too, (it is well known ſhe had the ſweeteſt Mouth in all *Italy*,) and we ſate a little While ſilent. Meantime I noted with fatherly delight how ſoft and equable her Breathing had become, how the haraſſed Look had diſappeared from her Face, and a faint,

delicate Colour had riſen on her white Cheek. She lay bliſsfully quiet awhile, and then ſaid,— "Go on, *Taſſo.*"

Olimpia here interpoſed with a little Jelly, of which ſhe prayed her Lady to take a few Spoonfuls. She did ſo, readily, and with Refreſhment to herſelf, and then again ſaid,—

"Go on, *Taſſo!*"

While this Interruption occurred, he had probably been turning in his Mind what to ſay next, for when he reſumed, he made a great Skip over the more painful Events of his Hiſtory, and ſaid,—

"Lately, when I was journeying towards *Savoy*, a pleaſant little Adventure occurred to me, which I think you will like to hear of. I was riding from *Novara* to *Vercelli*, when ſuddenly the Sky darkened with Clouds apparently brimful of Rain, and almoſt at the ſame Time, I heard a violent Barking of Dogs, intermingled with Shouts. A poor, trembling Fawn ſprang into the Road, chaſed by a Couple of ſtrong Hounds which pulled

it down juſt before my Horſe's Feet, and at the ſame Time there came up a handſome, graceful Youth of eighteen or thereabouts, who, beating them off, took up the Game, and handed it to a ruſtic Fellow at his Heels. He accoſted me, and ſeeing me to be a Traveller, warned me that the River I was approaching was ſo ſwollen as to be unſafe to croſs, and invited me, Stranger as I was, to partake the Hoſpitality of his Father's Houſe. Being unwilling, at firſt, to avail myſelf of his Kindneſs, I ſaid I would ſatisfy myſelf of the Condition of the River, which he let me do, ſtill keeping at my Side; and on my finding the Paſſage to be really impracticable, I ſaid ſmiling, 'Neceſſity now compels me to accept that Invitation which Inclination prompted me to already.'"

"A little ungracious, *Taſſo!* You needed not to have been ſo loth to accept a Favour."

"Well, he ſeemed to think ſo too, and ſaid, ſmiling, 'I would ſooner have been indebted to your Inclination than your Neceſſity, but

rejoice that you are on any Terms conſtrained to accept it!"

"He ſeems to have been a pretty-ſpoken Youth, and to have taken a Fancy to you at firſt Sight. Did you tell him who you were?"

"He kept eyeing me over his Shoulder as he led the Way, as though deſirous of making out who I could be. It was a wild ſecluded Neighbourhood, where Strangers are probably not very rife. I had already given up my Horſe to my Vetturino, and was following my new Acquaintance on Foot, when we came in Sight of a pretty Houſe near the River. It ſtood in a little Court-yard, ſhaded by ſome fine Trees, and ſeemed to have good Orchards and Gardens attached to it. A double Flight of low, wide Steps led to the hoſpitable Portal, which admitted us into a large, cool, lofty Hall, nearly as wide as it was long, paved with Diamonds of black and white Marble, and hung with old Arms and Inſignia of the Chaſe. From hence, my young Friend led me into the Dining-room, which was hung with ſtamped

Leather; the Table-cloth was already laid for Dinner, and the Beaufet ſpread with Diſhes of fine white Ware, heaped with Abundance of choice Fruit."

"*Taſſo*, how prettily you deſcribe! Go on, I like ſo to hear you!"

"'Beautiful and commodious is your Dwelling,' cried I, 'and, I doubt not, its noble Owner finds Nothing to regret in his Remoteneſs from Courts and Cities.'

"'I can aſſure you, however,' returned the Youth, 'that my Father is not unacquainted with them, though he paſſes the greater Part of his Time here. And he has a Brother at *Rome*, who ſtands high in the Confidence of Cardinal *Vercelli*.' This was ſaid with a little innocent Self-importance, Madama! as much as to ſay, 'I would have you to know we are not altogether ſuch Clowns as you might think!' 'Ah!' cried I, 'who is there that knows the good Cardinal and does not eſteem him?'"

"Why, *Taſſo*, do *you* know him ſo particularly well?"

"Hum! let that paſs, Madama! Juſt then, a Lad younger than my Companion, but of equally pleaſing Exterior, joined us, and ſaid that his Father was juſt coming Home. At the ſame Time, the Gentlemen rode up to the Door, followed by a Couple of Grooms, and, alighting, aſcended the Steps. He was a Man nearer ſixty than fifty; with a hale, healthy Complexion; large, brown, penetrating and benignant Eyes, deep-ſet under a firm Brow; and Hair and Beard of ſilvery whiteneſs. On my being preſented to him, he ſaluted me with a little Surpriſe, and then ſaid ſmiling to his eldeſt Son, 'Whence comes this good Gentleman, whom I do not remember to have before seen, either here or anywhere elſe?' The young Man replied briefly, on which, his Father with great Kindlineſs and Urbanity ſaid, 'Whoever you may be, you are heartily welcome to ſuch a plain Reception as I have it in my Power to offer.' I made ſome ſuitable Anſwer, and we then waſhed our Hands and ſat down to Table, the good Maſter of the Houſe making me

occupy the Place of Honour. The Fruits were from his own Orchard, the Pigeons from his own Dove-cot, the Game killed by his Son, the Bread made of his own Corn, ground in his own Mill; and the Converſation naturally turned on domeſtic Affairs, in which, I aſſure you, Madama, I knew not whether to be moſt pleaſed with his Simplicity or his Wiſdom. By-and-by, we were joined by his Wife—"

"How old was ſhe? Was ſhe pretty?"

"Nay, Madama, ſhe *might* have been ſo, ſome twenty Years ago, but I ſhall only ſay for her that ſhe was a graceful, benignant, highly reſpectable old Lady."

"How was ſhe dreſſed?"

"Now you puzzle me! Let me conſider —She was certainly not in white, nor yet in ſcarlet,—no, nor in pea-green,—nor yet in orange. No, no; ſhe muſt have been in black!—Black, full, ample, heavy, with a little white round her Throat. That would be all right, would it not, for an old Lady?"

"Ah yes, that will do.—Go on."

"After the Lady had withdrawn, dutifully ſupported by her two Sons, who preſently returned to us, the old Man fell into Reminiſcences of his early Years and the Precepts he had received from his Father, which I think he was not ſorry my Preſence gave him a Pretext for repeating in the hearing of his own Sons. They went to prove a hereditary Worth and plain Senſe in the Family. He dwelt a good Deal on how to chooſe a Wife, how to educate Children, how to govern Servants, how to regulate Expenſes, how to lay out one's Fields and one's Garden, how to inveſt Capital, and ſo forth,—Details which might not much intereſt you, Madama, but which agreeably wiled away the Evening, interſperſed as they were with harmleſs Pleaſantries, and appoſite Quotations from our beſt *Latin* and *Italian* Poets."

"Did he quote *you*, *Taſſo?*"

"Madama, he did not!"

"And did you not give him the Gratification of knowing who you were?"

"To what Purpoſe? No, he will only

remember me as '*the illuſtrious Stranger*, who talked about the Signs of the Zodiac!' Once, when we got upon Aſtronomy, and were ſpeculating whether the World had been created in the Spring or the Autumn, he gazed on me awhile with fixed Attention, and, after a Pauſe, ſaid with an Air of old-faſhioned Politeneſs that became him well, 'I ſuſpect I am entertaining a more honourable Gueſt than at firſt I had any Conception of.'"

"I am glad of that! What ſaid you thereupon?"

"That I was leſs ſignaliſed by Merit than by Misfortunes."

She ſmiled and ſighed. He ſmiled and did not ſigh.

"When do you think the World was created?"

"In the *Spring*, Madama, when He who created the World redeemed the World!"

"*Taſſo*, what a Bleſſing it is that He who created us also redeemed us!"

"Madama! it is the only Comfort in Life."

"The moſt painful Life is but a Span, and is felt as ſuch when we approach its Cloſe."

"And, even then, ſeems o'erlong, Madama!"

"*Taſſo*, there is only one Thing worth living for,—to work out our Salvation, even though it be with Fear and Trembling."

"What a Bleſſing, Madama, that Another has worked out for us what we could never work out perfectly ourſelves!"

"We can recline our tired Souls on his Merits and be at Peace!"

"We can lie down on his Redemption and look up to his Atonement."

"I am not long for this World, *Taſſo*."

"Madama, if I could, I would fly away to the Land where you are going, and be at Reſt."

"We ſhall all be there ſoon."

"'*Ecce menſurabiles poſuiſti Dies meos.*'"

Here there was a Pauſe. I, beginning to fear ſhe would become exhauſted, and alſo that he might ſtay too long for his own Safety, quietly remarked,

"It appears to me that we muſt diſmiſs you ſhortly, Meſſer *Torquato*; for, if his Highneſs return and find you where you are, his Mouſtachios will work like the Sails of a Windmill."

This occaſioned them both to laugh, and *Taſſo* made a Show to riſe, without doing ſo however; but Madama *Leonora*, ſigning to *Olimpia*, ſaid, "Offer him Refreſhment."

Bread and Wine ſtood on a Salver. He broke off a Fragment of Bread and ate it with Quietneſs and Deliberation; then raiſing the Cup to his Lips, inclined his Head gravely to her as he drank. She mutely bade *Olimpia* bring the Salver to her, and put the Cup to her Lips and ate a Fragment of the Bread. Looking towards me, ſhe ſaid kindly, "Take ſome, Ser *Pantaleone*." I did ſo, reverently, feeling Something almoſt ſacramental in it. She had cloſed her Eyes and folded her Hands, and I could tell by her whitening Lips that it was Time for *Taſſo* to depart. I ſignalled to him, and he ſlowly and reluctantly roſe, made the Sign

of the Croſs over her, croſſed himſelf, and gently took her Hand. She re-opened her Eyes and ſmiled as he kiſſed it, twice, thrice, —then, yet ſmiling, waved it to him as he withdrew. When I returned from ſeeing him forth, Madama *Leonora* was in a balmy Sleep.

Dederit dilectis ſuis Somnum!

CHAPTER XVI.

Of the Progress of Madama Leonora*'s Illneſs. And of Ser* Pantaleone*'s becoming weaned from the World*

AFTER this, Madama *Leonora* declined rapidly—ſo rapidly that for an entire Month I and her few perſonal Attendants were all whom ſhe ſaw; nor did ſhe nor did we take any Cognizance of Affairs without, nor intereſt ourſelves at all about Anything beyond the Suite of Rooms in which the laſt pathetic Scene of a Chriſtian Life was enacting, while all the Reſt of the Palace was devoted to the Feſtivities in Character with the Duke's recent Eſpouſals. *Verumtamen univerſa Vanitas, omnis Homo vivens!* There were two Worlds under one Roof. In one of them, faint Odours of medicinal Herbs and of Incenſe, huſhed

Footſteps, watchful Looks, ſilent Tongues, ſmothered Sighs, ſhaded Lights,—and now and then the grateful Entrance of the Phyſician or the Confeſſor;—from the other, were now and then faintly borne to us the diſtant Sounds of Muſic and the Dance, the Buzz of many Voices, the Smell of roaſt Meats, the Flouriſh of Trumpets, the Neighing of Steeds, the Applauſe of the People,—muffled by intervening Walls and cloſed Doors. I often thought, as I dropped the green velvet Curtain between the outer Ante-chamber and the Staircaſe, "Thus we ſhut out Life!—And to this will every one of thoſe merry Revellers come at laſt."

Thus, I neither ſaw nor heard Aught of *Taſſo*,—till, inquiring of him ſomewhat anxiouſly one Day of Dr. *Venieri*, as I ſhowed him forth, he whiſpered Something that petrified me.

I ſaid, "For Heaven's Sake, let not this reach our Madama!"

"He ſaid, "Certainly not. You yourſelf muſt be cautious, and her Women need not

know it. The Ducheſs *Lucrezia* will be ſure not to tell her."

I ſtood like a Statue when he was gone. I felt I could not at once return to Madama *Leonora:* my Looks would betray me, and my Heart was ſurcharged with Woe. I repaired to my own Chamber; and there ſtood *Roſalvino,* who gave me a Billet crumpled up into a Pellet, ſaying, "This was thrown to me through the Bars of a grated Window." Directly I ſaw the Writing, I recogniſed it, though it was ſtrangely marred, and blotted. Thus it ran:—

"I who loved Renown, Sympathy, Companionſhip with my Kind, the Song of Birds, the Diſcourſe of Men, the ſweet Looks and Voices of Women,—am ſhut up in *Santa Anna!* I, who loved the dear Face of Nature, and panted for freſh Air, am in a cloſe, darkſome Cell, from which I cannot even ſee the Sky. I, who was delicate in my Apparel, faſtidious in my Cleanlineſs, nice in my Food, fare like a Felon, have not Water enough to

quench my Thirſt, much leſs for Ablution! I who, like many imaginative Perſons, am unable to ſupport Solitude, am now lonely Day and Night, and Day after Day, without even ſeeing a Phyſician or a Confeſſor, and only hearing the diſmal Sounds of Chains and Laſhes. O tell me, you who love me! inſtead of ſeeking to cure me of being mad, are they not ſtriving to make me ſo? Writing Implements, indeed, I am allowed; but alas! Fancy and Imagination are ſtifled in this cloſe Cell, my Mind refuſes to form Images, and I doubt whether my Letters, full of ſad Complaints, ever reach their Deſtination. O Earth, Earth, Earth, cover not this Injuſtice! Teſtify againſt it, O Time, to all Duration!"

I ſat ſtupified over this Letter. Without conſidering how I might embroil myſelf, I hurried off to the Duke's favourite Courtier, Count *Scipio del Sacrato*, and exclaimed to him—

"*Taſſo* is in the Lunatic Aſylum of *Santa Anna!*"

" He is."

" Oh! is this the Faith pledged to him—the Iſſue of all the fair Promiſes held out to him?"

He ſhrugged his Shoulders. " If a Man will go crazy, what is to be done with him? The Duke has Care for his Health."

" No Phyſician has ſeen him."

" How do you know that?"

" His noble Faith in the Duke has been deſpiſed and ſet at Nought!"

" Pſha!"

" Poſterity will talk of this, Count!"

" We will leave the Affair to be ſettled by Poſterity."

" Ah, Count! I never yet ſolicited a Grace of you! Prevail on his Highneſs to grant me an Order to ſee *Taſſo*."

" His Highneſs has juſt gone to *Belriguardo*. Beſides, you are in cloſe Attendance on Madama *Leonora*, and cannot be ſpared."

" Do not deny me, I entreat, I implore you."

" The Thing is ſimply impoſſible. No one

has ſeen him, nor would the Duke grant me the Favour if I aſked it for myſelf."

"Why this unneceſſary, this unheard-of Rigour?"

"It has not been unneceſſary. *Taſſo* either *is* mad, or has acted as a Madman. Unleſs Madneſs palliate his Conduct, it has been unjuſtifiable."

"In what Reſpect?"

"Can *you* aſk?—you, who know his Paſſion for Madama *Leonora?*"

"It has never betrayed him into the leaſt Exceſs."

"Unfortunately, he ſtands committed by his own Pen. What think you of theſe Verſes?"—handing me a Paper, which, at firſt Sight, I concluded to be in *Taſſo*'s Hand.

Having peruſed a very preſumptuous and paſſionate Effuſion, with little that deſerved the Name of Poetry in it, ſave the Rhymes, I returned it to him, ſaying,

"*Taſſo* never wrote this, it is forged."

"How mean you!"

"I mean what I ſay. I know the Trick of

his Hand; and of his Style. At firſt Sight, there is a great Reſemblance, but there are Letters there which are not framed as he always frames them, and Expreſſions which the Nicety of his Ear would never permit him to uſe. As for the Sentiments, they have a Groſſneſs of which he is utterly incapable."

"The Duke, however, is perſuaded of their Authenticity."

"I wiſh I could undeceive his Highneſs. Such atrocious Frauds have already been perpetrated in *Taſſo*'s Name, that the unknown Framer of them, whoever he may be, has only taken one more Step in Guilt by committing this Forgery."

"Whom do you ſuſpect?"

"Alas, Count, what is the Uſe of mentioning Suſpicions unleſs I can bring them Home?"

"Quite right; therefore do not mention them to the Duke. It will be Time waſted."

"I *muſt*, if I can find Opportunity, or my Heart will burſt! What! ſhall theſe Verſes go down to Poſterity as *Taſſo*'s, to blaſt his fair Fame?"

He took them haſtily from me, as if afraid of my deſtroying them on the Spot, and truly I am Sometimes ſorry I did not do ſo at all Hazards, for I knew, to a moral Certainty, they muſt be *Brunello*'s. But I was growing old and diſinclined to perſonal Quarrels, ſee you, and had no Leiſure for them, now I was ſo much needed by my dear Madama. So I only reiterated with increaſed Poſitivity my Conviction that *Taſſo* had had no Hand in them, which I will believe and maintain, yes, yes! to my dying Day! Count *Scipio* heard me with a well-bred Smile of pitying Incredulity, and at Length ſaid, "You admit, that ſuppoſing the Verſes authentic, the Duke would have Cauſe for condign Diſpleaſure?"

"Certainly; though not for immuring the Writer in a Madhouſe."

"*Orſù!* . . our Puniſhments would be light, dear Ser *Pantaleone*, if we had the Choice of them ourſelves! *Santa Anna* is better than the drugged Cup or the Stiletto, at any Rate. The Duke's Judgment is in Mercy, and will be remitted, doubtleſs, when

your Friend has cooled a little. I am going to try ſome German Hawks—will you like to ſee them?"

And ſo I was bowed out, with a Heart ready to break.

I reſolved to appeal to the Duke, the very firſt Time I had the ſmalleſt Pretext for doing ſo, and, to this End, to wear a ſorrowful Countenance whenever I ſhould meet him, ſuch as *Nehemiah* wore before King *Ahaſuerus*, that he might of his own Accord aſk the Occaſion of my Trouble. But alas! his Highneſs was too much preoccupied with his own Affairs to be very likely to conſider the Looks of ſo unimportant a Perſonage as myſelf; and, even had he regarded them, the Illneſs of my auguſt Miſtreſs was ſufficient to account for them, without any aſking of Queſtions. Moreover, the Ducheſs *Lucrezia* now took upon herſelf to report her Siſter's Caſe daily to the Duke, aſſuring him that her illneſs was too great for his Viſits to her to be expedient, and Dr. *Venieri* daily gave his Bulletin, ſo that I had not the Office of

carrying News of her to his Highneſs in his Cloſet as heretofore, which was the only private Opportunity likely to occur. One Day, paſſing through one of the Antechambers, with a Heart full of Sorrow, I ſaw *Guarini* coming along, and got out of his Way, having no Mind to ſpeak to an old Enemy of *Taſſo*'s; but, to my Surpriſe, he took me by the Sleeve and drew me aſide, ſaying with an Air of great Trouble, "What is this I hear of our Friend? Can his great Mind indeed have given Way? or has he, as ſome of his warmeſt Admirers dread, committed ſome fatal Imprudence?"

"Neither one nor the other, believe me," ſaid I emphatically, "his Enemies, and they alone, have to anſwer for it." And was haſtily moving off, but he ſtill detained me.

"You lay an Emphaſis on Enemies," ſaid he, "as if I were one of them, but God forbid I ſhould feel Aught but Concern and Sorrow for a noble Mind ſo cruelly oppreſſed. Rivals we once were, I grant you, but the Race between us has long ſurceaſed, and even

if it were not ſo, my Heart would at this Moment be melted with Pity."

"Signor *Guarini!*" cried I, "theſe Feelings do you Honour!" and I graſped his Hand with Energy. A Tear ſhone in his Eye, and I felt my own moiſten.

Juſt then, the Duke paſſed by, with ſeveral Gentlemen, and catching Sight of me, pauſed a Moment and ſaid, "What ails you?"

"Sir! ſir!" cried I, almoſt carried out of myſelf, "have mercy upon *Taſſo*, in Captivity and Solitude!"

"In Captivity, but not wholly in Solitude," replied he, with ſomething like a little Kindneſs in his Eye, "*Giulio Moſti* now has Acceſs to him, and ſpends whole Hours in his Cell, liſtening to his Recitations and writing to his Dictation; in ſhort, doing all that can mitigate his Sorrow. He has alſo been removed to a Cell above-ground, where he can ſtretch his Limbs and ſee the Sun, and flouriſh like a Geranium in a Pot!"

The Admiſſions as well as Solaces contained in theſe few Words, filled my Heart ſo full,

that I could not proffer a Word, and the Duke, ſmiling, paſſed on. He, in the Plenitude of Health and Proſperity, to whom Air and Liberty were ſuch common and vulgar Things as hardly to ſeem worth remembering, to ſpeak of One to whoſe very Exiſtence they were eſſential, and who had been ſo ruthleſsly deprived of them, as flouriſhing like a Geranium in a Pot!

For my part, I wonder how People can put Flowers in Pots, or Birds in Cages, or ſnare Fiſhes with Hooks, or ſet large Birds to purſue ſmall Ones, or in ſhort, find Pleaſure in any Cruelty whatſoever. But I know my Sentiments are peculiar.

'*Veloces Pedes eorum ad effundendem Sanguinem.*'—

All this While, ſtrange to ſay, dear Madama *Leonora* never made one ſingle Inquiry about *Taſſo*, but deſiſted entirely from Anxiety about him, as well as concerning all mundane Things, and ſtayed her Thoughts entirely upon God. It was a bleſſed Thing for her that her Mind took this Turn, ſince there

was no good News for her, and I never ceaſed congratulating myſelf on having brought about that Interview, ſo ſoothing and beneficial to them both, which Anything turbid and tumultuous within themſelves might ſo completely have robbed of all Comfort, but which, under the chaſtening Influences of Sanctity and Self-control, ſhed a mild Ray of Light on their laſt terreſtrial Intercourſe.

She had now a thouſand pretty Thoughts about the World to come, and told me how ſhe dreamed of Angels and of CHRIST, and how ſhe beheld the heavenly Manſions already occupied by this and that Saint, and ſaw others buſily erecting and fitting up by eager loving Hands, for thoſe that would ſoon need them, the Lord JESUS ſuperintending all;—and how there were Cluſters of little Children flocking about in every Quarter of Heaven, and, as they grew up in ſpiritual Stature, being inſtructed by guardian Angels in all heavenly Knowledge; and what joyous Parties were ſetting forth

on Explorations to this and that Planet, and how others were harping and hymning Strains impoſſible to deſcribe, ſuch was their exquiſite Melody! and others, deep ſtudying Books of divine Lore written by Angels, under the immediate Dictation of the HOLY SPIRIT, and others, plunged deep in Thought, revolving eternal Mysteries, and learning the why and wherefore not only of the minuteſt Events of their own Lives, but of Things that had occurred from the Foundation of the World. Others, in Attitudes of Adoration, ſeeming as though every Faculty and Senſe were abſorbed in beatific Raptures; others, eagerly waiting at Heaven's Gate for the arrival of ſome loved Spirit on Earth; others, juſt re-united, in an Ecſtaſy of Bliſs. I declare it made my Head ſpin Sometimes to try to follow her, and at laſt I gave it over, contenting myſelf with the Conviction that GOD gives his dear Children ſuperordinary Supports and Revelations under ſuperordinary Trials, which we muſt not aſpire to under the common Events of Life. Notwithſtanding which, the

hearing theſe Matters ſo continually unfolded and expounded by one who ſeemed not only to believe in them but to ſee them, gave me ſuch a Reliſh and Savour of the Things of eternal Life, and made Things terrene appear ſo vapid and flat in Compariſon, as that I frequently thought in my own Mind that as ſoon as ſhe had departed this Life, and winged to her native Skies, I would ſettle my Affairs and become a cowled Monk, that I might wholly dedicate myſelf to GOD.

I heartily wiſh now I had done ſo! inſtead of which, putting it off from Day to Day, my Sorrow gradually wore off, and my Spirituality with it, and I became juſt as much as ever entangled in the Affairs of this Life. However, various Events, including the gentle Decay of my Health and Strength, have of late revived the Impreſſion within me, which a violent Attack of Sickneſs has confirmed, and the Review of my perſonal Hiſtory has conſolidated; ſo that I now am really intending to ſet my Houſe in Order, and join myſelf to the Monks of St. *Olivet*,

among whom I have ſeveral old Friends, and whoſe Convent I particularly admire for the purity of its Air, and the Beauty and Salubrity of its Situation.

CHAPTER XVII.

Of a Deathbed, of a Priſon, and of glorifying God.

HOWEVER, this is a Digreſſion—the Scene has not yet cloſed on her I loved. It was now my daily Care to carry her from her Bed to her Sitting-room, and my nightly Care to carry her from her Sitting-room to her Bed; for ſhe was minded to keep up as long as ſhe could. The firſt Time this Office fell upon me, ſhe propoſed it with Baſhfulneſs, ſaying, "I feel too weary even to crawl, and my Women might let me drop. Do you think, dear Ser *Pantaleone*, you could carry me?"

"Certainly, Madama!" ſaid I; and, lifting her gently up, "Ah," ſaid I, "you will not need very large Wings to carry you upwards —you are as light as a Feather already."

"Gently, gently," ſaid ſhe, "ſtop one Moment." And looking wiſtfully about the Room as we were ready to leave it, ſhe appeared to be taking a ſilent Farewell of each familiar Object. However, it was not the laſt Time, by many Times, that I carried her from it; and the Office ſeemed to endear us to one another as though we were Father and Daughter. "Good Night, good Night!" ſhe would ſay, ſmiling even while ſtruggling for Breath, "you ſhall be remembered in my Prayers."

"And you, dear Madama, in mine."

One Day, in paſſing along the Gallery, I again met *Guarini*, who ſtopped me to inquire with Solicitude after Madama *Leonora*. "I ſuppoſe you know," ſaid he in Concluſion, "that the young Duke of *Mantua* has viſited poor *Taſſo?*"

"I hear nothing now, Signor *Guarini!* But I rejoice to hear it, ſince it may have imparted a Ray of Joy to my poor Friend, even if it lead to no Intervention."

"But what a Mind is his, Ser *Pantaleone!*

He has now recovered himſelf ſufficiently to abſtract himſelf from ſurrounding Objects; and the Amount of Compoſition he gets through is immenſe! To ſay Nothing of Appeals to Princes, Cardinals, and Sovereigns that might rouſe the very Stones, he pours forth Verſes of inexpreſſible Beauty, compoſes Treatiſes and Dialogues of high Philoſophy, and Meditations full of heavenly Devotion. He is alſo buſy reviſing his immortal Epic, which he can never poliſh highly enough to pleaſe himſelf, and which he deſires may never ſee the Light till it has attained all the Perfection of which it is capable. But what will be his Grief to learn, that ſurreptitious Copies having been obtained of his firſt ten Cantos, the Printers are preparing already to foreſtall him with a lamentably incorrect Edition, pieced out with Proſe and ragged Rhyme where the original Copy is wanting!"

"You throw me into a Fever," ſaid I, "my Blood boils at it. Ah, what Injuſtice! what Infamy! The Harveſt of a Life ſtolen

from him by theſe Wretches not worth a Pumpkin-peel! What will he ſay?"

"One Good of his Confinement," ſaid *Guarini*, "is that the News may, for a While, be concealed from him, ſince he can get no Redreſs. For myſelf, it would drive me mad. *Aldo* is alſo getting his ſmaller Poems through the Preſs as faſt as poſſible; and, as you and I well know there are many Pieces among them in which the Reality of his Love for Madama *Leonora* is but too plainly betrayed for his Safety, I am ready, for the Fellow-feeling I bear him, to edit another Edition of them myſelf, which ſhall be beautifully printed and contain Nothing obnoxious. What ſay you?"

"That he will be eternally indebted to you, generous *Guarini!*"

"Nay," ſaid he good-naturedly, "now you make me feel aſhamed. I know not that I could be as ſympathizing with him in Proſperity as in Adverſity. But you may rely on my doing my beſt for his Safety as well as his Reputation."—Which, indeed, he did.

Fra *Panigarola* was preaching in *Ferrara* this Lent, with great Acceptance. The Duke heard him as readily as King *Herod* heard *John* the *Baptiſt*, and ſerved him nearly as ill a Turn in the End. However, as yet he was much run after; and *Taſſo*, hearing of him through the Friends who now had Acceſs to him, ſent him a moving Entreaty that he would viſit him in Priſon, with which he complied. The good Prieſt came to me afterwards, and told me that *Taſſo* beſought me to kiſs Madama *Leonora*'s Hand for him, and tell her that he was moſt deeply grieved for her continued Illneſs, which he had not lamented in Verſe from a ſecret Repugnance of his Genius to that Way of commemorating and bewailing it; but that ſhe might reſt aſſured he prayed for her Day and Night, and that he had ſent her one or two of the moſt cheerful Compoſitions he had been able to make, in the Hope that they might wile away ſome heavy Hour. Thereupon, the good Father took a Packet from his Boſom, containing

ſome paſtoral Verſes, and that charming Dialogue, "*The Father of a Family*."

I received them, but informed him that, owing to Madama *Leonora*'s declining State, we never ſpoke to her of *Taſſo* at all, nor had ſhe once named him, nor was ſhe aware of his Confinement. He ſhook his Head, and ſaid, "So beſt"—and I then begged to retain the Compoſitions for my own Peruſal; to which he conſented on Condition of my returning them to him afterwards.

But I had no immediate Opportunity of keeping my Promiſe; for our dear Madama very ſuddenly grew much worſe, and the laſt Offices of Religion were performed for her. I ſhall never forget the Scene—the ſolemn adminiſtration of Extreme Unction, the chanting of Pſalms, the waving of Incenſe, the ringing of the paſſing Bell, the Glare of waxen Tapers; while the dying Princeſs, with her Hands meekly croſſed on her Breaſt, looked like ſome beautiful monumental Effigy of the pureſt Alabaſter. When the Duke and the two Ducheſſes had quitted her, and only her

perſonal Attendants remained about her, ſhe opened her Eyes from what had appeared a death-like Stupor, and ſaid, "Put out the Lights!"

There was a great Wax-candle burning at the Foot of her Bed, as well as many Tapers about the Room. Seeing we did not obey her, ſhe ſoftly ſmiled and ſaid, "Ah! you think I know not what I am ſaying; but to me the whole Chamber is ſo full of ſupernal Light, that your waxen Tapers, in Compariſon of it, are mere Darkneſs."

Preſently after, ſhe whiſpered to *Olimpia*, who was hanging over her, that ſhe thought ſhe heard a great ruſtling of Wings in the Air, of Angels that were come to convoy her releaſed Spirit. Whether this were Deluſion or not, I cannot ſay; but ſhe ſhortly lapſed into the moſt peaceful Sleep, which laſted the better part of an Hour; and then, ſuddenly opening her Eyes with a bright, dazzled, aſtoniſhed, delighted Look of Recognition towards Something inviſible to us, ſhe cloſed them the next Inſtant, and drew her laſt Sigh.

I can never chooſe but weep when I think of that Event; and yet it was moſt bleſſed—

Vattene in Pace, Alma beata!

I ſhall ſay nothing of the pompous Obſequies enſuing, the lying in State, the midnight Maſſes, and ſo forth. Her bleſſed Spirit had Nothing to do with them. *Olimpia*, her faithful Attendant, to whom *Aurora* and *Maddalena* only played inferior Parts, broke down completely after the Need for her Exertions was over, and went to recruit among her own Friends. A few Months afterwards ſhe married well; her Huſband being one of the Court Pages; by name, *Vittorio Leti.*

As for myſelf, after diſpenſing certain private Charities and Kindneſſes in Accordance with the Directions of Madama *Leonora*, whoſe Confeſſor had likewiſe much Bounty of hers to beſtow, I prepared to indulge in a thorough Change of Scene, by viſiting ſome of the *Gambacorti* in *Rome*.

But, firſt, I obtained Acceſs to my loved

Friend in *Santa Anna*, whom I had not, till now, had Heart or Leisure to see. I found him alone, pale, wan, and in threadbare Attire, but meek, patient, and self-collected. As soon as he saw me, however, he flung his Arms about my Neck, and burst into a Flood of Tears. I, remembering his former Exclamation, "Do Madmen weep?" and softened by the recent Loss we had mutually sustained, mingled my Tears with his.

"Tell me all about her," said he, drying his Eyes, and eagerly drawing me to a Chair. So I did; and went minutely into every devout and pathetic Saying of hers that I could call to Mind, to all which he listened with frequently recurring Bursts of Grief.

"I dare say plenty of Elegies and Monodies are being written on her," said he, "but I,—I cannot! Grief cannot find Vent in Poetry, in its first Excess, though it may when it has subsided into Sorrow. Did she leave me any last Message? any Word of Kindness?"

"Strange to say, she never mentioned you after your last peaceful, cheerful Interview.

Nor had ſhe the Pain of knowing your ſad Fate; but, one Day, when we were alone together, ſhe cut off this long Ringlet, and gave it to me with a ſilent Smile, and I conclude ſhe meant me to give it to you. It could not have been for me, becauſe ſhe had already given me ſome Hair in a Ring."

"It *muſt* have been for me," ſaid he, taking it eagerly and kiſſing it. Then, murmuring, "*Voluptas ſolamenque mali*," he put it into his Boſom.

"They tell me," he preſently began, "that my *Jeruſalem* has been infamouſly pirated; but the News fell on a dulled Ear, juſt after learning that I ſhould ſee *Leonora* no more. Perhaps I ſhall feel it more, ſhortly. Juſt now, it ſeems to me that all the Earth contains is not worth an Egg. And, after all, Ser *Pantaleone*, what is Fame, what is Succeſs? The *Purſuit* is the Thing! I only wiſh I had been as faithful to my Vocation as it has been to me! Say, is it a mean Thing to have the Power, in a Place like this, to people my

otherwiſe horrible Solitude with Shapes and Voices of Beauty and Grandeur? '*Me quoque Muſarum!*' I have attained ſuch a Power of embodying what I conceive, that the Creatures of my Imagination come and go at my Will with every Semblance of Reality, and I can converſe with *Plato* or *Socrates* as pleaſantly as I now converſe with you."

"You muſt beware of carrying this too far, though," ſaid I, "or your Imagination may lead you to the Verge of an Abyſs. As long as you ſummon and diſmiſs your Phantoms at your Will, they may ſerve to beguile your Solitude; but, if they ſhould come to be introduced without your own Volition, they might turn your Brain."

"Perhaps they may do ſo at laſt," replied he ſadly, "but Meanwhile I take with Gratitude the Alleviations a kind Providence affords to my hard Fate. After all, who knows whether *Alfonſo*, the worſt of Men, may not effect the beſt of Purpoſes? My Soul is being ſtrengthened and annealed under the Blows of the Armourer's Hammer."

"In that Caſe, my dear *Taſſo*, you will have Reaſon to bleſs your Captivity."

"I can't do that, yet!"

And ſo, after ſome more friendly Talk, we parted; but not before he had told me ſome ſuch beautiful yet wild Fancies, that I, a plain, proſy Fellow, could not help having ſome dreadful Forebodings of his going mad. However, it was only owing to the high Preſſure of Solitude and Inaction on a vivid, active Mind.

Shortly afterwards, I proceeded to *Rome*, and thence, after ſome Months, to *Naples*, where I ſojourned a While with my Friends the Monks of Mount *Olivet* in their delicious Retirement. It ſtands on the north Side of the City, on a precipitous Height crowned with Pines, Firs, and Cypreſſes, detached from the World beyond by a deep but narrow Ravine with a rapid Rivulet at the Bottom of it—typifying, I think, the ſpiritual Chaſm which ſeparates the Monks themſelves from the World ſo little removed from them that they can ſee and hear much of what paſſes in

it. The rippling of the Rivulet, the Murmur of the Sea, blend with the Convent Bells and choral Services; within the Walls is the Perfume of holy Incenſe, without them the Fragrance of innumerable Flowers. Moreover, the good Monks (who have an incomparable Way of dreſſing Beccaficoes) poſſeſs a rare Library and keep an excellent Table. Their Soups, eſpecially, are perfect.

While I was here, the *Jeruſalem* came out. It ran like Wildfire over *Italy*, nay, over *Europe*. Two thouſand Copies ſold in two Days. In ſix Months it was reprinted ſeven Times. The Author, meanwhile, ſane and innocent, known by all the World to be in a Mad-houſe! Such is Fame: ſuch is Juſtice: ſuch is Life!

Our Monks of St. *Olivet* had early Copies, I warrant you! Oh yes, it was a religious Subject! All about *Jeruſalem* and the Cruſades; a ſacred Allegory of the Hiſtory and Myſtery of Man's Fall and Salvation—not a Word about Love and Romance and Enchantment, of Courſe. The Chriſtian Army,

compriſing different Nations, typified Man, compounded of various Faculties and Paſſions. *Godfrey* was the Underſtanding; *Rinaldo*, the Imagination; *Tancred*, the Affections; *Armida*, Luxury; *Sophronia*, Martyrdom; and ſo on to the End of the Chapter. I think they liked the Story, though! We uſed to have many a Talk about it in the green Alleys of the pleaſant Garden, which, as far as white and red Roſes, Myrtles and Jeſſamines went, could hardly have been outrivalled by the Gardens of *Armida*. It was curious to hear us praiſing the ſimple Diet of *Erminia* and the Shepherds, while eating the beſt of Fiſh and drinking the beſt of Wine.

On returning to *Rome*, I found my Uncle, who was in his ninety-eighth Year, ſick of a Fever. There could be no Indelicacy in ſuppoſing, at that Time of Life, that the Iſſue might be fatal. I tarried to await the Reſult, which was what I had prognoſticated. He left his Fortune, which was liberal, in equal Shares, between my Couſin and me. Unfortunately, my Couſin wiſhed to have the

Whole of it; and, as I wiſhed to have my Half, we went to Law.

This Lawſuit laſted a long While, and was at Length decided in my Favour. On my Uncle's Affairs being ſettled, however, the Reſidue was extremely moderate. Before the Buſineſs was finally arranged, it was neceſſary I ſhould go to *Mantua*.

Meantime, a great and ſimultaneous Effort by the Princes of *Europe* had been made for *Taſſo*'s Releaſe, without Effect. The Duke was keeping him in Charge only out of Kindneſs! Even the Ducheſs *Lucrezia* was now among the Interceſſors, but all in vain. So the Affair ſtood over.

Then, after a While, it was ſtirred up anew by the Pope, the Duke of *Tuſcany*, and the Duke of *Mantua*. At the Inſtance of the latter, Duke *Alfonſo* at length relented. The Duke of *Mantua* was to be responſible for his Harmleſſneſs; he was never to uſe his Pen againſt the Houſe of *Eſte*, nor to ſhow himſelf again in *Ferrara;* all which the Duke of *Mantua* gladly engaged for. After

ſome vexatious Delays, the Releaſe took place, but *Taſſo* was not permitted to kiſs the Duke's Hand on his Departure; which did not break his Heart.

I was preſent the Evening he reached the Duke of *Mantua*. I remember his dazzled Look as he came into the lighted Saloon out of the Dark. He paſſed on to his kind Friend and Patron, who cordially embraced him; and cheerful, thankful Words were ſpoken. Afterwards, he came round the Circle, and, to his Surpriſe, came to me. I believe I was a good Deal leſs changed than he was—he knew me directly. Certainly I had alſo known *him;* but his Hair, once ſo beautiful, was cut ſhort, and had ſome Threads of Silver in it; his laughing Eye was ſunk and quenched; Care ſat on his thin Cheek. But there was the old Smile; the old Tone!

"O, loved Friend!" ſaid he, twining his Arm in mine, and drawing me out into the Balcony, "Life is ſtill ſweet, Liberty is precious! They have kept back my Books, my Letters, my Manuſcripts, every little

Property belonging to me; but I am free! And my Country rejoices in my Name. As I came hither, I met a Shepherd ſinging

"*Intanto* Erminia *infra l'ombroſe Piante*"—

as he led his Flock.—I heard a couple of Travellers quoting *Armida*.—I ſaw a Girl at an Inn ſtopping her Ears while ſhe read the Death of *Clorinda*. I am popular among the People!

"What are you doing here? what are you about to do?" he preſently added.

"I am going to devote the ſhort Remainder of my Life to GOD."

"So am I.—One by Contemplation; one by Action; both, perhaps, by Suffering!—Anyhow, let us glorify GOD!"

FINIS.

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